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# The Reading Teacher

THEME OF THIS ISSUE

Promoting Growth in the  
Interpretation of What Is Read

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## UNABRIDGED

WHAT IS *it*? This is a question frequently asked but seldom answered. In most instances the *it* referred to is a sight and a feel. As such *it* represents sensible information which we can experience.

To ask "what is its name?" tends to keep the name distinct from its object and to keep language subordinate to experience. Or, to reverse the question and ask "what is a cow?" is to make us realize that a cow is a sight, feel, and smell about which we cannot communicate accurately with those who have not had experience with a cow. The classic definition of a cow\* shows us how words may be resolved into words and yet not enlarge our sensible knowledge.

But not all words refer to sensible information. Words like love, faith, eternity refer to internal feelings contemplated chiefly by our consciousness. As such they possess an immediacy, an urgency and vitality, which gives to every man a mute revelation of worship that cannot be refuted by logic. Zeno's paradox respecting motion and the race between Achilles and the tortoise represent a sophistry and absurdity that similarly encompass infidels who by their very own internal feelings are liable to religion. However, the moment we clothe those feelings in words we are wandering from the substance to the shadow, from the realities of divine creation to the

conventions of words created by man, and we must contend with the entanglements of communication.

Does all this give substance to the pristine significance of reading? Is it true, as Betts says, that reading is thinking? Does the reading process lead to an apparent parallelism with learning, as Triggs says? Must these concepts be understood if the objective—to promote growth in the interpretation of what is read—is to be accomplished?

The outcry against the insidious "lock-step" has been repeated, and to some degree the pattern has been broken. The outcry against the insidious "round-the-robin oral-reading" practice has been heard, and the practice has been largely eliminated.

It remains for us, however, to be as vociferous and vigorous against a practice that is in many ways even more corrupting—the practice of "round-the-robin comprehension." This is the procedure whereby the teacher asks the questions and the pupils play-back answers from a text, usually verbatim. There is no reflection, no weighing of facts and inferences, no reading and rereading to make judgments, and no generalization. The consequences of such reading in an era of mass communication can be as costly to the members of a free society as the destruction caused by a "clean" nuclear bomb."—R.G.S.

(Note: Many of the ideas developed above are based on Alexander B. Johnson's *A Treatise on Language*, University of California Press, 1947.)

\*See page 164.

## Reading Is Thinking

by EMMETT A. BETTS  
● THE BETTS READING CLINIC  
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**M**Y CHILD can't read!" is a common complaint of parents. When asked what they mean, parents explain that Johnny doesn't have the necessary phonic skills to learn words. It is true that word (telling-the-child-the-word) method of teaching beginning reading has produced many non-readers and crippled readers. While phonic skills are essential in learning to read, reading needs are not met by massive doses of isolated drill on phonics.

It is true that too many children do not know phonic and other word-learning skills and are, therefore, handicapped in their reading. There is also evidence that more of our pupils need help on *how to think* in a reading situation. But too often parents believe their children can read when they are merely pronouncing words.

Most parents can tell that a child is reading poorly or not at all when he cannot identify written words. But it takes a competent teacher to identify the six-year-old who repeats the exact words of an author to answer a question, the eight-year-old who does not relate names (antecedents) to pronouns, or the older student who has not learned to tell the difference between facts and opinions. In short, professional competence is needed to assess the learning needs of pupils and to guide their development into truly able readers.

### Strategy

For developing thinking skills and abilities, highly competent teachers have in mind a well-conceived master plan:

*How to identify and provide for individual differences in needs and levels of achievement within the classroom (1).* Master teachers recognize the limitations of standardized tests for estimating an individual's (1) independent reading level, (2) teaching or instructional level, and (3) specific needs. For this reason, they make maximum use of systematic, informal observations of pupil behavior in reading situations. They know that a pupil cannot be taught how to think when the instructional material is so difficult he finger points his way slowly under each word or gives up in despair. They also know that the best reader in the class can realize his full potential only when he is dealing with interesting materials that challenge his thinking. Therefore, they *plan in advance* to organize their classes in different types of groups to provide equal learning opportunities for all pupils.

*How to identify and classify comprehension needs, as a basis for when and what to teach (3, 13, 14).* Competent teachers preplan—that is, map their strategy—to teach children how to think in different types of read-

ing situations. They consider large groups of pupil needs:

1. Does the group have the necessary personal experiences for making a concept? Hal, for example, cannot estimate the distance from New York to San Francisco. During the discussion, however, he tells about a 500-mile trip to visit his grandmother, which he had helped to plan on a road map. His teacher helps him to use his personal experience with 500 miles to estimate on a map of the United States the 2600-mile airline distance. From this point, Hal continues to develop his concepts of space. Equally important, he takes new interests to reading.

2. Does the group use language effectively to deal with ideas (2)? Language serves at once to express and to shape our thoughts. In other words, we think with language. For this reason relatively simple language may be used to discuss everyday ideas, but complex language is used to discuss abstract ideas.

*Penny, ball, dictionary, and raccoon* are labels for things in the physical world; that is, we can point to a *ball* or a *dictionary*. *Roundness*, on the other hand, is a quality, or an abstraction. *Cottage, dwelling, or structure* can be used to represent different levels of abstraction. In life we can point to a *cottage* but not to *cottage*, to a *dwelling* but not to *dwelling*, to a *structure* but not to *structure*. At their successive levels of abstraction, *cottage, dwelling, and structure* are shorthand representations of increasingly complex concepts. It is with these nonverbal and

verbal abstractions that we do our thinking. So, we teach pupils how to abstract and generalize, and help them develop an awareness of their use of abstractions.

*And, or, but, for, etc.*, are connecting words which get their meanings from language. They connect or show relationships between ideas. The meanings of these words are taught, therefore, in their language settings.

*Ten, minute, mile*, and other definite terms can be interpreted when the pupil has certain concepts of quantity, size, etc. However, he may trip over *almost, long, soon*, and other indefinite terms, unless he has been given cause to think about their relative values.

To improve the interpretation of what he reads, the child is made aware of the important ways in which the meanings of words shift. For example, *talent* may mean "musical talent" or "the Biblical thirteen talents"; that is, two different things.

Comprehension is improved by an understanding of the structure or organization of language. Often the sentence gives a clue to the meaning of words. An appositional explanation ("Thor, the god of war,") may tip the scale of understanding. An index type of clue may explain a new term: "The *thralls* were the carpenters, the fence builders, the fagot carriers." Then again, a classification type of clue gives needed detail: "These people lived on the valley's neat farms and sowed barley, wheat, and other *grains*." These and other types of context clues are con-

sidered in the teacher's strategy to improve thinking abilities.

Relationships between subject and predicate, between modifying and independent clauses, and between modifying phrases and other sentence elements are hazards to comprehension until the child understands them. Equally important are the meanings of different types of linking, separating, and enclosing punctuation, as, for example, when the dash is used to "direct the reader's attention backward" (15).

*How an author develops a story or presents information, as a basis for preparing a teaching plan.* Master teachers have learned that the best motivation for reading is the pupil's inner drive to learn—his questions and other expressions of purposes. Consequently, they plan to know each selection used for intensive directed reading activities with a group. This knowledge helps them take the group smoothly and promptly into the introduction of a well-written story or informational selection.

The introduction is usually a brief, stimulating setting for the story. For example, the title of Lee Wyndham's "Grandma's Ostrich" causes both children and adults to ask, "Why did Grandma have an ostrich?" This question is answered clearly and provocatively in the first few paragraphs.

When teachers *know* a selection, they can skillfully guide the pupils' reading from the introduction into the main body of it. After the pupils learn that Grandma "inherited" the ostrich from a defunct circus of which she was part owner, they

always ask, "What did Grandma Jones do with the ostrich?" Reading to answer this question takes the group through the main part of the story.

When the pupils learn how Grandma Jones taught the ostrich to behave, they usually ask, "But will she be able to keep him?" As they read the conclusion of the story, they learn how a special event resolved the conflict, leaving them with a sense of satisfaction.

By *planning* their strategy before using a selection to develop skills, master teachers prepare themselves to develop (1) *interest*, (2) *phonic* and other word-learning skills, and (3) *thinking* abilities in the field of action—the guided reading of the story.

*How a teaching plan is organized as a basis for making the best use of teaching opportunities.* When competent teachers guide individualized reading they plan ahead to make accessible to their pupils (1) books at their *independent* reading levels and (2) books that can be used to develop new interests and skills. When guiding a directed activity in a basic reader, however, they group the pupils so that the first reading is done at the teaching or instructional level, and the rereading can be done independently (1).

These master teachers know that a selection or a book challenges their pupils when it presents new learnings. They also know that when a child is frustrated by the difficulty of the material, interest wanes sharply and comprehension is defaulted.

When making systematic use of a

basic textbook teachers familiarize themselves with the strategy of the authors — the organization of the teaching plans. First, they learn how the pupils are prepared for reading a selection, especially the attention given to developing interests and concepts to be taken to it.

Second, they note the kinds of suggestions given for guiding the first or silent reading of it. In this part of the plan they give special consideration to the ready availability of specific help on both phonic and thinking needs which may arise.

Third, they evaluate informal suggestions, study-book use, and other help given for rounding out learning experience so that growth is insured.

### Tactics

One of the earmarks of a successful teacher is the ability to plan strategy for insuring the necessary conditions of learning. Skillful planning (1) places a premium on individual differences, (2) permits a sharp focus on the specific thinking needs of the pupils, (3) makes the most of the teaching opportunities in instructional material, and (4) gives a set for the wise selection and use of tactics or teaching procedures. Above all, the teacher is free to use the author's guide book with discretion.

Master teachers plan to help their children find out "what the author says"; that is, do literal reading. But they do much more: they plan to have the pupils learn how to "think about what the author says," to do critical reading (4).

In preparing the pupils for read-

ing a selection in a story book, for a study-book activity, or for pursuing a major interest in some curriculum area, master teachers guide them into *thinking* about "what we know" and "what we want to know." The first step assesses their interests, attitudes, and concepts which they take to the activity. The second step heightens interest and establishes clear-cut purposes to guide their thinking. In short, the teacher uses sound tactics for starting the pupils on the road to critical thinking, to the considered evaluation of ideas and concepts.

With a general purpose and specific questions in mind, the pupils are ready to locate and evaluate sources of relevant information. This activity requires a consideration of the reputation of authors, dates of publication, etc., even when using basic readers and study books.

In surveying the materials the pupils are made aware of the difference between facts and opinions. They learn, for example, that the following are statements of fact because they are verifiable:

"In August of 1620, two vessels sailed from England, headed for the new world."

"The temperature in this room is 80 degrees Fahrenheit."

They will learn that a great many statements are opinions, or expressions of attitudes, and are not verifiable:

"You will have fun with it."

"This room is hot."

When pupils learn to discriminate between facts and opinions they tend to do less arguing and more discuss-



ing. Equally important, they are better prepared to select information *relevant* to their purposes.

In testing the relevance of material pupils learn to answer these questions: (1) What does the author say? (2) Is the statement a fact or an opinion? (3) Does the statement answer my question? (4) How can I use this statement? (5) What other help did the author give on my question?

Many kindergarten children learn to judge between highly relevant and totally irrelevant statements. As children learn how to think at succeeding school levels, they make closer judgments of the relevance between statements.

Judging the relevance of statements to purposes plays a major role in thinking. First, the pupil evaluates relevance of sub-points to each other and to the main points in an outline. Furthermore, he consistently uses questions or statements, sentences or phrases to parallel language structure with his ideas. Second, he evaluates relevance in visualizing both stories and information: sequences of important events in a story or experiment, organization of material on maps, charts, slides, etc. Third, he uses relevant facts in solving a mystery, in using the results of an experiment, in making social judgments, etc. That is, straight thinking is required for drawing conclusions from related facts or from cause-effect relationships (5, 10, 11, 12).

In following through on their strategy for teaching children how to think, teachers are confronted with

a subtle, but potent, tactical situation: Attitudes. This situation can be summarized as follows.

1. The child's interpretation of a selection depends upon the attitudes he takes to it. Therefore, preparation for reading includes the assessment of attitudes toward the topic. Favorable attitudes increase comprehension, while unfavorable attitudes interfere with comprehension.

2. The child's attitudes influence recall. Favorable attitudes promote ease and vividness of recall, and unfavorable attitudes tend to produce hazy, confused ideas.

3. Favorable attitudes increase interest in a topic or a type of selection.

4. Individual attitudes are modified by peer discussions.

### In Summary

Contrary to popular opinion, children can be taught how to think. Their ability to think is limited primarily by their personal experiences and the uses they make of them in problem solving, in abstracting and generalizing to make concepts, in judging, and in drawing conclusions. Under competent teacher guidance children gradually learn to think, within the limits of their rates of maturation, or inner growth (6,8,9).

From available evidence it appears that children who have not learned to think far outnumber those who have not learned necessary phonic skills. (Both, of course, are crippled readers or non-readers!) Consider the number of children who can pronounce *fearless*, for example, but

who think it means "afraid." How many children cannot divide  $1/3$  by 4 because they have merely memorized a meaningless rule about "inverting and multiplying"? Or, how many high school graduates cannot subtract a minus 2 from a plus 10, because they have never related the mathematical process to the use of a thermometer? How many children can pronounce astronomical numbers and yet cannot estimate the coast-to-coast distance across the United States? How many children try to achieve variety of sentence structure by the mechanical rearrangement of sentences rather than by the careful consideration of the ideas they wish to express? The answers to these and related questions offer undisputed evidence of the need for teaching children how to think.

The mere pronunciation of words, the memorization of phonic or mathematical rules, and other emphases on rote memory and mechanics lead to the use of empty words. This false security in words leads to the acceptance of a carload of words without a single idea. The acceptance of word manipulation rather than the thinking about ideas is called *verbalism*. And verbalism can become a malignant disease in education, dooming the would-be learner.

But there is hope, real evidence of progress in understanding the strategy and tactics of teaching children how to think. In the last ten years, four outstanding books have been published on the psychology of thinking. Writers of pedagogical

textbooks in social studies, science, arithmetic, and reading have begun to apply the conclusions reached by psychologists. Lastly, it is highly significant that this issue of *THE READING TEACHER* is dedicated to the proposition that children can be taught how to think.

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## Language Factors Involved in Interpretation

by LUELLA B. COOK  
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OVER THE past few decades we have made remarkable progress in discovering how children learn, and as a consequence the techniques for teaching reading have been greatly improved. But we have made equally significant progress in understanding the nature of language as an instrument for the expression and communication of meaning. Both kinds of knowledge are essential to the improvement of teaching, and the tendency to rate one as more important than the other is one of those tragic mistakes which seem often to accompany a new discovery. Our pupils need teachers who understand both the complex nature of the growing child and the equally complex nature of language, which also grows and changes and interacts upon those who use it.

Modern linguistics and semantics bring new concepts to the teaching of the language arts, although these new concepts are only now beginning to filter down into textbooks and classroom procedure. This new knowledge, moreover, is not the kind of knowledge which can be transmitted in neatly wrapped packages ready for immediate use. It must first be assimilated as a kind of intellectual nourishment before it can be used in the countless small but important ways which a deeper knowledge can usually suggest.

It is this fact, perhaps, which discourages the all too busy teacher, eager to improve methods of teaching but pressed on all sides by new bids for his attention. There just isn't time to "soak up" a new subject, as a plant soaks up nutriment from the soil; time only—so it often seems—for a quick watering from the top, if the soil seems dry. We live in a crowded, hurried age, a "practical age" we call it, and our attention is drawn almost irresistibly to materials and methods, tried and tested and guaranteed to work, rather than to new content.

It is here, one suspects, that the weakness of the "modern" position lies: in an overweening faith in the immediately workable, and a corresponding loss of faith in the values of a deeper, more penetrating knowledge on which we ourselves may rely as we face the day-to-day problems of language teaching.

It has been said flippantly that the place of grammar in the school curriculum (elementary and secondary) is largely inside the teacher's own head, to be drawn out and used as occasion suggests. There is hidden wisdom in the quip, and it is largely the insecure teacher, one suspects, with only a limited, formalized grasp of his subject, who makes of grammar a moot issue, insisting that it be taught outright, as a subject in itself,



at a specified time and place.

When children first come to school at age five or six they already "know" grammar in a very practical way: they can put words together into sentences, manipulate subjects and predicates, even punctuate orally, by pause and inflection. Who among us would not envy a similar command of a foreign language, unrecognized and unorganized though such knowledge be. We tend to ignore this kind of knowing, and regard grammar and punctuation as sets of rules to be *applied* to language rather than as the very nerve and sinew of the language itself.

In many minds the word *grammar* is associated primarily with the idea of correctness in speech and writing. A knowledge of grammar, it is assumed, will protect one from making errors in word form or syntax — errors which carry heavy social penalties. To make a grammatical error reflects on one's cultural background, lowers social standing, and reveals a lack of schooling. Despite the fact that statistical studies show very little correlation between a knowledge of grammar as such and habits of correct speech and writing, the idea still persists that the chief reason for studying grammar is to be able to speak and write acceptably. We have still to rescue grammar from this limited view and to accord to it the full importance it deserves as an aid not only to the expression of meaning but also to the interpretation of meaning.

Traditionally grammar is taught in connection with speech and writ-

ing, rather than in connection with reading and listening. Yet a long, complicated sentence, with its subject and predicate separated by modifiers; or a compressed statement in verse, with connecting elements implied rather than directly expressed; or an isolated grammatical element standing alone in the lines of a play, its relationship buried in the context of the dialogue—these are problems that confront readers and listeners at all grade levels as they struggle with meaning. That we have been reluctant to take full advantage of these opportunities to deepen and strengthen pupils' understanding of language structure is perhaps attributable to our prejudice against analysis in the study of literature. It all depends, of course, on how, when and where analysis is conducted. That minute ill-timed analysis of sentences has blocked appreciation and enjoyment of a poem or story is all too true. That it need not do so is equally obvious. Assuming that analysis follows rather than precedes an effort to secure a total view and total response, the search for hidden meaning can lead quite naturally to the locating and naming of sentence elements.

Punctuation, too, we have regarded primarily as a discipline of writing rather than as an aid to reading. Yet obviously a writer punctuates not for himself but for his reader. Perhaps we would succeed better in teaching pupils to use punctuation marks if we first made them aware of their importance as an aid to interpretation. That we have not

commonly done so is perhaps accounted for by our tendency to regard punctuation, like grammar, as a subject in itself, divorced from the problems of communication, a set of rules to be learned and *then* applied, rather than as a set of convenient devices constantly employed on the printed page to facilitate the grasp of meaning.

Rules, of grammar or of punctuation, are important chiefly as concise summaries of facts previously noted. By themselves they often block understanding — until one sees what they mean. Knowing the rules is no guarantee that one will apply them; but applying them is proof that one knows them.

I was thinking in this vein the other day as I noted a billboard along the highway advertising a lotion for sunburn: *Tan—don't burn* were the words that struck my eye. At first I felt the inner discord to my ear of *Tan don't*. Then quickly, thanks to the dash, I reconstructed the sentence, using *tan* as a verb instead of a noun, and the meaning came clear.

Were I back in the classroom, I should approach the teaching of parts of speech not so much by the route of definition, as by the route of observation. Indeed, here lies the great advantage of incorporating language study into the teaching of reading, for it is in reading that opportunities for observing sentence structure in relation to sentence meaning are constantly offered.

During the writing of this article I happened myself to be reading

*Rainbow on the Road*, a delightful novel by Esther Forbes, on the book jacket of which John P. Marquand had this to say: "I have never seen the illusion of a period (early 1800's) so beautifully presented. Somehow she has caught the whole spirit of New England which I used to recognize when I talked to very old people during my childhood."

As I read the book I was happily aware of how it was the language itself, as much as any other single element, which expressed that spirit, and I began to note how many little side excursions into the field of language structure and usage a teacher might plan for a class of youngsters during the reading of such a book. The quaint idioms of the style — such as "cottoning on" (for catching on) to something, the poetic license of using the ungrammatical "could of" for "could have" — suggested to me many leads for introducing pupils to the concept of word-connotation: to the aura of associated meaning which most words and phrases wear, and to the need on the part of reader or listener to become aware of these more subtle elements of style if he would gain full pleasure from reading.

But I found myself noting also, as I read on, another kind of lead into language study: I found sentences which yielded their literal meaning only as one paid some attention to grammar, either consciously or unconsciously. "Although Mr. Butters (owner of a bookstore, with rooms to rent) '*slept travelers,*' he didn't '*eat them.*'" I doubt that this sen-

tence would create any real difficulty of interpretation even for students in the late elementary grades, but its strange use of *sleep* as a transitive verb, and the humorous turn of thought at the end of the sentence, resulting from the compression of a whole sentence into a single verb, provides a lead into a discussion of language structure. What is the complete sentence which the two words "eat them" stands for? How would we phrase the thought? The use of quotation marks around the curious idioms sounds a warning that the words are to be taken with a grain of salt. Such facts about language seem to me to be worth calling attention to, helping pupils, by skillful questions, to make their own observations of the structure of thought.

Here is another brief passage I noted in my reading as one which might lead to still another insight into the structure of thought:

"But take all that yarning that night, sitting around the barroom of Pierce Tavern, how much did people really believe all that? I'd say for a guess less than half . . . Those who didn't believe came right along to enjoy the ride. I'm referring to Lawyer Gyp Hammond. Real knowing, men like that. Jude, too, maybe. Never was sure of him."

We fret constantly over the failure of our pupils to recognize in their own writing the sentence fragment and the run-on sentence, yet constantly they are exposed to them in their reading. Another way to approach the problem of grammatical

correctness might be to ask them to supply the missing elements, or to find the way that grammatically complete parts are linked together—sometimes, as in the first sentence above, by a comma. If this seems heresy, consider for a moment which is the more important concept: the grammatically complete unit, or the manner of indicating it. There seem to be reasons why the author and the editors preferred to use a comma after *Tavern*, instead of a semicolon. Were I to use this passage to help pupils gain insights into language structure I should help them find those reasons, rather than stress too heavily the "error" of the comma splice.

Similarly I would set them to looking for the missing sentence elements in the rest of the passage, asking them to complete the clause that begins with the subject "less than half"—half what? Or, I'd ask them to add a clause to "I'm referring to Lawyer Gyp Hammond," beginning with *when*, in order to make clear the meaning which so often is to be found between the lines.

Similarly the last three sentences of the passage need to be built up grammatically within one's own mind. To grasp the meaning the reader must shift the order of words, supply missing parts, and interpret the function of *knowing*. Is it used as a verb or an adjective, and within the context of the sentence, what does it mean?

Listening to the Burns and Allen show on television one evening as I

was thinking about this article, I noticed how Gracie's humor depends in large part on her failure to supply the missing parts which in ordinary conversation we all omit, trusting to our listeners to supply them. It is they, as much as we, who should know their grammar—know it well enough to accept our incomplete statements which nevertheless make complete sense.

Gracie came bursting in on George, who had been waiting long for his dinner, with the announcement that Dr. Somebody-or-Other was coming over to help the Mortons (the Allen's neighbors) with their marital troubles. Leaping right over Gracie's words, George said to Gracie, "How about getting dinner?" Replied Gracie: "Oh no, George, he's a psychiatrist not a cook. He couldn't do that."

Gracie's delightful humor consists in part of ignoring contextual clues, of failing to put two and two together as she listens to other people. The point of all this is that both reading and listening offer a wealth of material for helping pupils observe the intricacies of language structure as it is both expressed and implied. Were we to use language less fearfully—fearful that our pupils will pick up bad habits of speech and writing—and more discerningly we would build a kind of understanding and interest in language as a phenomenon, which would make much simpler the task of teaching various social conformities in the use of language. Conformity for conformity's own sake is a difficult pill to swallow.

Conformity for valid reasons, applied to matters one understands, is more readily accepted.

These are but some of the more obvious language factors involved in the interpretation of meaning as they are suggested by one's own understanding of modern linguistics. From the field of semantics come other language factors easily incorporated in our teaching of reading and in the study of literature. One of these has been previously mentioned in connection with one of the passages from *Rainbow on the Road*, the concept of connotation. The difference between the denotation and connotation of words is an important language factor, appropriately taught functionally at all grade levels. Recognition of the difference between what a word *says* and what it *means* in its total context is a semantic discipline, easily incorporated into vocabulary study or the interpretation of literature. As pupils of all ages seek the full meaning of a poem, response to its emotional meaning is as important as grasp of intellectual content, and the association of words is as important an item of content as is their pronunciation, spelling, and definition.

Here again observation plays its distinctive part, and I can think of no material more readily available for this purpose than that found in advertising where the use of words to affect judgment has been developed to such a high degree. Once pupils recognize the magic of words in themselves—even in cruder and more vulgar forms—the way is

cleared for the more subtle responses elicited by literature. The sound and movement of words, their rich suggestiveness, sometimes by their tonal effects, sometimes by their associations, are a vital factor in communication, not confined to literature, but used daily by everyone to enhance or supplement meaning.

There are other language concepts to be introduced to pupils in their study of language, already familiar to teachers of literature: the concept of irony, innuendo, under- and overstatement. These, too, are language phenomena to be first observed before they can be understood. And there are an increasing number of books retailing to the laymen other fascinating facts of semantics. New tests are on the market, too, dealing

with these more subtle aspects of appreciation.

Ours is, indeed, a rich content field, as well as a skill-subject, and the rewards of exploring that field to see what new knowledge can be put to use in the development of language skill are many and varied. We need, I think, to re-examine that field, to see how much it has grown since we ourselves were undergraduates, how it has both broadened and deepened our understanding of the world in which we live: a world in which people struggle desperately to understand one another before it is too late; a world in which the problems of communication are crucial and involve factors that go far beyond conventional correctness and social conformity.

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## Promoting Growth in Critical Reading

by FRANCES ORALIND TRIGGS  
● COMMITTEE ON DIAGNOSTIC  
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**C**RITICAL READING is truly the interpretation of symbols. Historically, when there was little printed matter available, people's behavior was guided by interpretation of symbols, but the symbols were not the printed word. Learning came only from an individual's limited surroundings. In this day, when rich written sources are available, we tend to forget that all reading, especially critical reading, is based on interpreting symbols. It is apparent, when we carefully consider the matter, that a word or picture becomes a symbol only when meaning is attached to it. The meaning which is attributed to a symbol is not intrinsic within the passage or picture or experience but is there only when the reader supplies that meaning

### Reading as a Three-way Process

Conceivably and justifiably reading can be considered a one-way process, a two-way process, or a three-way process depending on the purpose for which the reading is being done. If a person is reading to get information only, then all he must do is to find a specific date, name or other fact, and his purpose is accomplished. If his purpose is to determine the accuracy of the fact, then reading becomes a two-way process for the information gained from reading must be checked

against information the reader has or will obtain from some other source. If the purpose of reading is to gain knowledge, to modify or add to the information the reader already has, or to gain background for interpreting what the author says, then reading becomes a three-way process. The reader reads not only to add to understandings he has, but to modify and perhaps change those understandings. He also must judge as he reads whether the author's background and subject matter checks with his own previous knowledge gained from reading and other real and vicarious experiences; but more than that, he must check more than one author in this manner to make such judgments.

Critical reading then requires a contribution by both the author and the reader, and an interplay between these two contributions which usually results in a new understanding—something more than or different from the original contributions. Thus critical reading, at least in one sense, results in learning, in education itself.

Certain comprehension skills are necessary to critical reading: ability to read for main ideas and details and to distinguish between the two, ability to recognize inferences and conclusions, and ability to adapt the rate at which materials are read to the situation met. In order to apply

these comprehension skills, a reader must have, or gain as he reads, understanding of the words used by the author. These understandings of words are gained from actual experiences, or from vicarious experiences which often come from reading. Thus again the reading process leads to an apparent parallelism with learning in general, or with education itself as broadly conceived.

### Teaching of Critical Reading

If this seeming parallelism between critical reading and learning or education seems confusing, perhaps examples from the process of reading done at the various levels of education will help to clarify this relationship. Reading and learning do overlap but they are not synonymous. "Critical" reading is critical only in terms of the background of the reader and is not confined to the reading of what would be considered by us all as markedly difficult material. The extent to which reading is "critical" reading is relative in terms of who is doing the reading and what is being read.

For example, the principle of "reading readiness" in its narrow meaning as applied to preschool and early formal education provides a parallel to growth in critical reading. All teachers accept the fact that a child, even if he can learn to recognize words, often cannot understand, cannot truly "read" these words. Thus the importance of his having in his auditory or meaning vocabulary the words he is learning to recognize at sight and through application of

word attack skills. And how does a child come to understand a new word? Through experiences, using reading, and avenues of learning other than reading, to supply meanings which are attached to words. These words then become the symbols of the experiences. This process is accomplished by stimulation through the various senses so necessary to education, especially in these early years: smell, taste, feel, sight, and hearing. And the ability of one sense to stimulate another or others should not be forgotten either. A child may say, "That story makes me think of . . ." The listener (later the reader) begins to react to the stimulus of words by calling up previous experience. Is this not a step toward his later doing so in critical reading?

*Learning critical reading in an exact science.* — We find another parallel in the laboratory experiment in the science class. The student has now learned many reading skills which he can apply, but he meets words technical to the subject which he does not entirely understand, and the good teacher realizes that to make the meanings of these words completely clear, they should be illustrated as well as discussed, and the ideas for which they stand should be described. Let's take, for instance, *chlorine*. There are many derivatives of this word. The teacher may do a simple laboratory experiment which has as its purpose illustrating the volatile characteristics of chlorine when free. Thus he takes some compound of chlorine, heats it, or uses some agent to release the gas. The

students smell the chlorine. They are asked of what it reminds them. Most will say they have smelled something similar when they ran a bath, or when they went in swimming, or give other experiences which are stimulated by the smell apparent when chlorine becomes a free gas. Then the teacher will try to relate this experience with chlorine to other experiences by comparing the characteristics of this gas to other gasses with which the students may have had direct contact: ammonia, gasoline, and the pungent smell from solids such as wax. There will be discussion of the uses of chlorine in industry, medicine, and in everyday life, and the properties which make it valuable for these uses. Now the teacher has supplied "readiness," has made the symbol, i.e., the word *chlorine*, really meaningful to the student. Supposing now the student reads in the newspaper about the cost of water purification by the use of chemicals, one of which is chlorine, and by the use of other methods. As a voter now, he reads what is said critically and with interest because he brings to his reading previous knowledge. Again, he may get a sore throat while at camp and may remember the discussion of the disinfecting qualities of chlorine. He gargles a solution of table salt. Thus his real understanding of this symbol has twice contributed to his experience. And as his experience grows, his understanding becomes greater.

It is through such processes that a background is built up for critical reading. At this stage the student is

able to add to his knowledge through reading about chlorine, for it is a meaningful symbol to him. He can also check what he reads not only against what one author says, but against combinations of what authorities say and what he knows. This is critical reading.

*Learning to read critically in the social sciences and the humanities.*—Critical reading in an area of exact science has been illustrated. Critical reading where human relations, feelings, affect, and emotions are involved becomes even more complex.

Again we go back to the readiness principle. In early years, the child's reading skills are not yet as mature as his feelings about a familiar subject. The teacher, therefore, uses pictures to convey broad connotations for words being introduced. "Reading pictures" is a familiar technique in the early grades. In one picture a child is crying (a symbol!) and a dog lies on the road. A man with a white jacket (a symbol!) and a black bag (also a symbol!) kneels beside the dog. The teacher asks the children how each person in the picture "feels." The children suggest such words as *sad, sorry, sick to the stomach, ache, cry, hurt*. These words are not parallel as suggested by the children, but they can be woven into a story which can be read and which may have as its purpose an illustration of how words express feelings. Children must grow in their understandings of such words as *love, hate, beautiful, wonderful, sorry*, and others like them which will make reading critically in



the social sciences and humanities real to them, or such reading will be neither enjoyable nor profitable. Teachers know that the feeling expressed by the word *sorry* may not have been experienced in relation to the word. There is a time in a child's life when he does not know this word and until it is experienced, and is in some manner connected with the word itself, it almost defies explanation. In some manner the word itself must become the symbol for the feeling, and the feeling must be experienced many times to make the symbol a meaningful tool of critical reading. Perhaps the best example of *word* reading (the reader says the words but they stimulate no meaning or thought in the reader's mind) is seen when many students are prematurely, and without adequate "readiness" activities, pushed into reading some of our great classics. What does reading of *A Tale of Two Cities* mean to the student who literally knows nothing of the French Revolution and of the life and people of England at that time. He has never *felt* the oppression of a similar social situation and this may be his first exposure to it through reading. He has not lived through either recent great war; communism, fascism, and certainly oppressive monarchies are only words to him. Here television and discussion of the mob action in terms of passages read aloud become valuable readiness activities for reading critically. This is a sociological as well as an historical novel; it certainly was not put into the curriculum for the story

itself. Students are supposed to grow in their ability to assess the effects of methods of governing people. One intended outgrowth is surely the fact that government of the people functions only so long as an informed citizenry makes it function. Another intended outgrowth is that it is dangerous to draw hard and fast conclusions which cannot be modified by experience. Students must learn that in the area of human values there are no final conclusions. Holding one's judgments in abeyance in order to gain enough information on which to be critical is an important learning. Citizens may revolt from oppression, but the degree of oppression is not the same to every person or to all groups of persons. Why have not predicted revolts taken place in Russia and China? Actually for many Russians and Chinese who have never known self-government, freedom of expression and action, present conditions may not seem like oppression. The reader must bring understandings of this kind to his reading if he is to read critically.

How does the student gain the background to read critically in the humanities and the social sciences? By making reading a three-way process! It can be three-way only when the reader's skills are so sharp that they are almost automatically applied. The skillful golfer need not be told what club to use or what stroke to try but senses it from the situation and can immediately call on the skills needed and shift to them automatically. Just so the *reader* must be able to shift from skill to skill, sometimes

applying them in quick sequence, unconscious of the fact that this is what he is doing in order that his energies may all be on recalling, sorting, checking and seeking understandings. This is true of all reading skills: vocabulary, word attack, and comprehension skills.

### **Teaching Word Attack Skills and Learning to Read Critically**

A great deal is being written and said concerning methods of attacking words and ways in which these skills are being taught. It is important for a student to understand these skills intellectually and to be able to use them so easily that he is unconscious of the fact that he is using them except where he needs consciously to call upon them when meeting a difficult, unknown word. These skills function to support the reader when reading critically as well as reading for other purposes. As the reader practices these word attack skills, they become automatic, partially at least, through what a psychologist would call cue reduction. At first, when a skill is learned, the user has to go through every step consciously, each step stimulating the next as one line of poetry calls to mind the words of the next line. Soon, as the reader's use of the skill progresses, the steps are applied in such close conjunction one to another that he is unaware of his use of the separate steps. He may even skip some steps because they are not needed to get to the end result, but he probably does not know this.

However, the student must learn

word attack skills in meaningful context, for the purpose of all reading is understanding. There is no time when reading is merely word calling. Yet the rote learning of word attack skills tends to result in word calling, not reading. Previously in this article reading has been described as a one-way, two-way, or three-way process. These processes become increasingly complex but all are based on understanding of what is read. Word reading is none of these, and the learning of word attack skills without reference to the meaning of the words to which they are applied has two fallacies: first, there is no purpose for recognizing the word if it calls up no meaning, for without meaning the word cannot be used in reading, and second, the meaning of the context in which an unknown word is found should itself be used as a part of the attack the reader takes to make the word meaningful.

There is probably no more difficult problem met by a teacher than that of helping the "word reader" to make reading meaningful. Such a student can often parrot all of the word attack skills but cannot apply them. Research has established the importance of the teaching of all the reading *skills*, but they must be taught in meaningful context in order that they may be "transferred" and used in the reading of all materials and for all purposes. This is a most important principle. Early psychological research which resulted in the finding that transfer of training is not automatic, must in fact be taught, is the basis of this principle.

If word attack skills are not so taught, then it is almost certain that the reader will not be able to use them to help him when reading for purposes much less demanding than critical reading.

### **Critical Reading of Biased Material**

Another outgrowth of the ability to read critically is the ability of the reader to recognize the use of words weighted according to the result desired but not necessarily according to the facts presented, or those which are studiously not presented. The reader, aware that material presented in a biased manner is intended to sway those who are exposed to it, is able to check both what is and what is not presented. He will withhold judgment on critical issues, political and social, until he has adequate basis for coming to a considered conclusion. Propaganda can be either good or bad, often according to the bias of the writer, but it should be recognized for what it is, and the critical reader is in a position to interpret what is presented, checking from his own background of present knowledge or the knowledge he will obtain before acting on the basis of what he has read.

### **Speed and Critical Reading**

Reading critically, that is, reading to check thoroughly what is written, illustrates well the fact that the reading process involves a close association of the writer, the reader, and the world around them. The impression that reading is a simple race of the eyes, excluding the mind, is a direct

result of the putting a premium on speed of reading alone without regard to the effect of reading on the reader and the contribution the reader makes to the reading process. It is odd that the need for flexibility in using reading skills according to the purpose and background of the reader for reading and the material being read should have led to such overemphasis on speed. (However, a careful consideration of the need for ability to read critically, which also involves flexibility (many rates of reading according to the need) will help to make the rates at which a reader reads little more than a symptom of his other skills and not a major point of attack in improving reading skills. This should be remembered especially when teaching adults to improve the efficiency with which they approach their reading tasks. These persons may be anywhere along the scale of proficiency in any of the reading skills. Teaching these adults to increase the rate at which they read without first diagnosing other skills is a very superficial approach to teaching them. Almost without testing, other difficulties of the adult reader become evident. The person who spells poorly, the man who can't concentrate, the person with careless speech characteristics, and the individual whose style of written expression is inaccurate, is exhibiting behavior related to his language skills and, therefore, symptomatic of the efficiency of his reading skills, just as the rate at which he reads may be symptomatic. No one of a person's reading skills can

be treated without regard to others if a professional job of teaching reading is to be done.

### Summary

Critical reading is similar to the pinnacle reached after a steep climb. It involves the use of all of the reading skills the reader has, but it includes more; to read critically one must read *beyond* the material presented by the author and involve one's own experiences and previous learning. Critical reading also involves adding to the reader's knowledge. It is, therefore, evident that critical reading should be taught at every developmental level. The

teacher of the first grade knows that teaching critical reading is as important as teaching word attack and comprehension skills. Thinking is the basis of critical reading and every child challenged to use his ability can learn to read what for his level of understanding is critical. It is the failure to emphasize at all levels the three-way reading processes, along with the teaching to the level of mastery of the basic reading skills, that causes some of our students to accept as truth whatever they see in print, failing to react personally in such a way that fallacies become apparent. They never have learned to read critically!

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### An Opinion About the Cow

A schoolboy's account, from Letters to the Editor, the *New York Times*, March, 1932.

The cow is a mammal and tamed; she has six sides, right, left, front, back, top, and bottom. At the back end, there is a tail from which hangs a plume, with which she drives off the flies so that they cannot fall in the milk. The head has for its aim to have horns and that the mouth can be somewhere. The horns are there for horning, the mouth for chewing a cud. Under the cow hangs the milk and it is arranged to be

milked. When people milk, the milk comes and there is never an end to the reserve. I have never learned how she makes more and more milk.

The cow has a good odor, one can smell her from far away; it is for this reason that there is fresh air out in the country. The mister cow is called a beef; he is not a mammal. The cow does not eat much, but what she eats, she eats it twice, that is why she has always enough. When she is hungry she chews a cud and when she does not say anything, that is that her stomach is full of food.

## Did the Candle "Egress"?

by MARY A. LYNN  
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PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WHEN THE writer transferred from the elementary to the secondary school level, she met William. He sat expressionless and inactive in the last row. Today, William would be catalogued as a "slow learner" with a "very limited experiential background," but to this neophyte he was an eighth grader and presumably equipped with the skills that most eighth graders are supposed to possess.

One day William approached the teacher and pointed to a word in his spelling list. The word was *egress*. The teacher, absorbed in her work with a group of his classmates, pronounced the word, then suggested that he look up the meaning in the dictionary, and write a sentence using the word correctly.

That evening, while shuffling through the paper returns of the day, the teacher read William's masterpiece: "The boy lit the candle but it is egress."

It was an epochal evening. The teacher suddenly realized that the dictionary, unaided, cannot provide adequate *interpretation* for the eighth-grade Williams of this world. Sure enough, one of the definitions listed under *egress* was "going out." William had selected the definition that had meaning for him, and had used the word in terms of his experience.

Why was the teacher's approach to William's problem inadequate? There are two reasons which appear outstanding in the light of the theme of this issue of THE READING TEACHER. First, the teacher should never have included in William's spelling list a word that was not in his speaking-reading vocabulary. Second, when she sent the boy to the dictionary to look up the meaning of *egress*, she failed to take into account the fact that the reader must interpret the writer's experience in terms of his own. Where there is no background of experience to bring to the printed word there will be no comprehension of it.

In pronouncing judgment, it might be charitably stated that the teacher had, momentarily at least, forgotten that reading is a "thinking process" wherein the reader must reconstruct, reorganize, and reassociate the meaning behind the symbols (words).

How can teachers help junior high school children improve their interpretation of what is read?

This article will suggest three approaches used by the writer for *promoting growth in interpretation*. They are: (1) Purpose setting in the directed reading activity, (2) Firsthand experience, (3) Use of newspapers, magazines, supplementary reading.



### Purpose Setting and Interpretation

It is the writer's belief that the DRA (Directed Reading Activity) is the logical and most vital approach to the problem of interpretation. Preliminary to the discussion, however, it must be clearly understood that reading has no subject matter of its own. Second, although developmental reading is a reading-to-learn process and transcends the limit of any reader or text, for the sake of brevity the writer will confine the discussion to the use of the DRA solely in the field of English.

Can the DRA be used with a class of thirty eighth-grade youngsters? The answer is "yes." But before initiating instruction in a Directed Reading Activity the teacher must know two things about every pupil concerned: (1) the highest reading level at which the pupil can read independently, and (2) the highest level at which the pupil can read profitably for instructional purposes. Assuming that these facts have been obtained through a reliable program of testing and by teacher study, and that the children have been grouped *within the class* as homogeneously as possible, the teacher is ready to begin the DRA.

Since the reading ability levels of the pupils would naturally cover a wide range, the materials used would need to be geared to different instructional levels. For example, there is a set of readers which contain identical stories in two editions: in one edition the vocabulary is

about fourth level, while in the other it is higher. Thus, two groups can be reading at the same time the material at their social-age level, and yet the needs of individuals operating on a lower reading-age level can be met. Other material, like the *Reader's Digest Reading Skill Builder*, can also prove beneficial when dealing with thirty pupils in a forty-five-minute period.

The most important phase of the Directed Reading Activity is purpose setting, which might be thought of as the lubricant which causes the DRA to function.

The role of the teacher in a DRA is to direct, not tell. A first step in this directing process can be to have the children turn to the page where the new story begins. There is usually a picture. The teacher may ask, "What do you think is going to happen in this story?" If a group is involved, a lively discussion should follow. Good thinking will enable the children to put elements together and predict possible outcomes.

By use of the picture, the teacher (1) called upon the background of pupil experience without artificial aids; (2) discovered the language background of the group; (3) recognized concepts the children associated with the materials as they chose words to talk about the story; and (4) integrated available facts and made conclusions, which served as the purposes for reading, by having the children predict outcomes.

After the group has made conclusions the pupils are motivated to read to see if they were right. Just before

the go-ahead signal for silent reading is given, it is helpful to have a quick review of the purposes set. Do not write the purposes on the board; the pupils must remember them.

When the silent reading has been done, check on how well the pupils accomplished their purposes by: (1) asking if the pupils found what they were seeking, and (2) having different pupils restate their purposes, give the answers they found, and read the lines that prove they are right.

Purposes may be general (whole class agrees), or specific (peculiar to each pupil). There are many ways to set purposes: by use of the first picture, the title, the first picture and title, all the pictures, after reading the first two pages, etc. The children should be taught to use each technique so that they can vary their approach to different reading situations. The important thing is to have the pupils study the facts at hand and predict. To predict one has to think.

### **Firsthand Experience and Interpretation**

In any program aimed at promoting growth in interpretation of what is read, emphasis must be on experience. If pupils are to associate correct ideas with words they must have experiences and, wherever possible, the experiences should be firsthand.

Our eighth-year English curriculum has a unit on medieval life and the "core text" for this unit is Eloise Lownsberry's *The Boy Knight of Reims*. When the pupils were setting

purposes prior to the reading of this book they wanted to find out many things. To quote a few: "What is meant by Gothic architecture?" "Why did it take so long to build Reims Cathedral?" "How did a boy become a knight?" "What were the homes (and home life) really like in the Middle Ages?" "How long did the Middle Ages extend?"

Before reading to find answers the class visited the medieval section of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Cathedral-Church of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. The pupils planned the trip, made the necessary arrangements through correspondence, paid for the chartered bus, and after the trip wrote thank-you letters to the persons concerned.

When the pupils turned to *The Boy Knight of Reims* their interpretation was enhanced because they now had many new concepts to bring to the reading. For instance, Leah, aged thirteen, wrote: "I was surprised to learn that everything in the Cathedral was handmade on the grounds. I understood better how Jean's family worked for Reims Cathedral." Cheryl said, "I learned some very unusual things. . . . At first the different shades of each color in the stained glass were imperfections. Later, they used the knowledge of these imperfections to make the stained glass even more beautiful. There were fifteen variations of red in one very old window in the museum." Walter wrote: "I liked the exhibit of armor and the knight on horseback. I want to know more about how a boy became a knight."

### Supplementary Reading and Interpretation

The enthusiasm for medieval life did not end with the trip. Some children had found interest areas which they wished to pursue. This led to more reading: *Men of Iron*, *Otto of the Silver Hand*, *Joan of Arc*, encyclopedias, books on architecture and on knights, etc. The children were alert to many evidences of the modern adaptation of the Gothic in present-day buildings. A few even tried carvings in soap or soft wood.

But life in the Middle Ages does not occupy the entire attention of the eighth-grade class in English. Last year's "good group" was encouraged to make their own selection of books for class reading after completing the one just mentioned. They selected, read, and enjoyed *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *The Swiss Family Robinson*, and *The Adventures of Odysseus and the Tale of Troy*.

It was a source of amusement to the class that, later in the year, the great-great grandson of one of the mutineers on the "Bounty" visited the city to speak at a religious conference. He also appeared on television. *Read* magazine contained an article on the "Bounty," and *Life* and *National Geographic* contributed excellent pictures of today's Pitcairn Island and its inhabitants. Through the courtesy of the principal and the superintendent, the motion picture "Mutiny on the Bounty" was procured. It was interesting to note that the majority said they had enjoyed the book more

than the Hollywood version of the story.

After reading *Mutiny on the Bounty* the class became so divided in opinion concerning the consequences of the mutinous act that they decided to debate the question—*Resolved: That Fletcher Christian was wrong in instigating mutiny aboard H.M.S. BOUNTY*.

The preparation included experience in (1) research on the proper procedure for debating; (2) looking up material on the mutiny aside from that given in the book; (3) critical sifting of all information, retaining only material pertinent to the question, (4) voting for the participants—two members each for the positive and negative, a chairman and a timekeeper; (5) presenting the debate to an audience.

So convincingly did both sides present their case that the judges, guests from the administrative staff, declared the debate a "draw."

The writer also has a class of twenty-five boys ranging in age from thirteen to sixteen, IQ's in the seventies and eighties, reading levels from low first to high fourth, and all classified as in the "eighth year." What is the class doing? First, learning to live together peacefully, second, trying to develop a desire to read through appeals to one of the fundamental interests of most boys—sports.

The World Series furnished an excellent motive. The stories used for class enjoyment so far this term are "Babe Ruth," "Lou Gehrig," and "Jim Thorpe" from the series *Child-*



hood of *Famous Americans*, published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.

Oral discussion accompanies the reading, most of which is done by the teacher in an audience situation. This is followed by simple written comprehension exercises. Since the work is to be done independently, the teacher uses a controlled vocabulary for the written exercises—usually on a first- or second-grade level. For example: Babe Ruth's real name was (John, Joe, George); Yankee Stadium has been called "the house that (George, Ruth, Babe) built." The results are usually favorable, and the boys appear anxious to get good comments on their papers.

*Readers Digest Skilltext* (Books Three and Four) is used on an individual or small-group basis. *Our Weekly Reader* (Grades Two and Three), and the *Cowboy Sam* series prove adequate for the very retarded.

Do the boys object to reading this material? It has been the writer's observation that, *given material with a vocabulary that he can handle*, a boy or girl will rarely refuse to accept the reading material selected for him or her.

In closing, the writer would again like to pay tribute to William, the

"slow learner," who at times displayed the wisdom of a philosopher, and the stark beliefs of a realist. By the middle of the term he had progressed from the *egress* stage to the five *W*'s of a good newspaper article—Who, What, Where, When, Why.

The class was instructed to select a human interest story from a newspaper and bring it to class, together with a brief written statement concerning the five *W*'s of the article. Several examples had been discussed in class preliminary to the home assignment.

Next day William appeared with the obituary of Mrs. Bessie Chalmers, aged seventy-nine. The first four *W*'s received factual answers, but the fifth echoed man's complete resignation to the inevitable. William had written: "Why? Her time was up." Could Socrates have done better?

In summation, then, this paper has endeavored to do two things: first, to present a few practical ways by which junior high school teachers can help junior high school children improve their interpretation of what is read; second, to pay tribute to all the "Williams" in junior high, whose startling literary efforts can catapult their teachers from the ruts of complacency.

### From The Clip Sheet

In the September, 1958, issue of the *English Journal*, John R. Searles presents the third annual supplement to the list of sources of free and inexpensive materials that was published in the *English Journal* of

October, 1955. Reprints are available for the 1957 list and the 1958 list. Order from the National Council of Teachers of English, 704 South Sixth St., Champaign, Ill. \$0.20 each.

## Helping Children Read and Interpret Science

by WILLIAM W. RASOR  
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DANBURY, CONNECTICUT

**T**HO RAX," I said very carefully to my fourth-grade pupil. Was Bill a slow learner or a precocious child when he looked up at me in a very puzzled manner and said, "Does that have sumpin to do with the Axe of that thunder an war god you were talking about the other day?" Of course the other children laughed, and it was a rather delicate situation for a few moments to prevent Bill from becoming embarrassed. Bill had not been with us the previous day so he did not know that thorax was a part of a grasshopper's body.

The situation was not really new; similar ones occurred many times in my early days of elementary teaching, just as one had occurred a few days ago. However, this recent incident more clearly brought into focus a problem, and what we as science teachers should be doing about it.

Today, two questions foremost in the thoughts and discussion of many educators and laymen are: "How adequately are our children learning to read?" and "How adequately are we preparing our children in science?" Experience has shown me that there is a symbiotic relationship existing between the two learning situations and that, as with any symbiotic relationship, each partner may well be used to the benefit of the other while doing no harm to the welfare of its partner.

Bill could read and pronounce the

word. However, no matter how well he could verbalize the word, he had not learned to read until he was able to talk intelligently about the words he could verbalize. The fact that the other children could not only recognize the word, but could talk intelligently about it, substantiates the maxim that a background of previous experiences is one of the important prerequisites to understanding the printed page. A study carried out by Serra (4) with fourth-grade children gives evidence that there exists a high positive relationship between the comprehension of verbal abstractions in science and background information.

Elementary science is a most lucrative area for providing background experiences that will give meaning to word symbols before and during the time the child is encountering them on the printed page. Much of science for the young child is concerned with real tangible objects and their relationships with each other. In science as children work with the tangible objects and relationships, they can be building the necessary background of experience which will enable them to intelligently interpret the printed word or symbol when they encounter it.

Let us look at how this symbiotic relationship between science and reading may become a reality by starting with the first phase of teach-

ing. The conscientious teacher recognizes that pre-planning and follow-up are essential characteristics of teaching either science or reading. As she tentatively plans the future learning activities for the children, certain science concepts are chosen as being important to develop. Knowing that concepts are not developed as a result of going through a rigid set of specific science experiences, but rather that the development comes from a variety of flexible experiences, she selects activities which are most adaptable to her situation.

### Dual Experiences

It is during this phase of planning that the symbiotic relationship between reading and science experiences should be recognized and used as one guide in the selection process. A successful method of selecting experiences which will enhance both the reading and science experiences, is to ask the reversible question: "What reading experiences can I provide for these scientific experiences?" And the reverse: "What science experiences can I provide for my reading experiences?" With a little thought and ingenuity many dual experiences can be planned. However, in making the selection of dual experiences the teacher needs to be very cautious in her choice of science reading material. One is not on safe ground in assuming that just because a book or pamphlet is marked "primary" or "intermediate" it may be an appropriate reading material for the specified grade level. As a matter of fact, to use some

of the material at the specified level might do considerable damage to the child in terms of both science and reading. If the material is beyond the child's ability to use, he may well start building a dislike toward both reading and science. Some research in this area, by Malinson *et al.* (2), indicated that some regular graded textbooks were even likely to be difficult for all children at the indicated level, and that there was relatively little more dependability in the grade placement of the pamphlet or unit-type organized booklets (3).

Think of the last time you walked from school to town or just walked around the schoolground. What did you see, or better yet, perhaps, what could you have seen? People moving, animals moving, clouds moving, leaves moving, insects moving, perhaps a plane or train moving. These are just a few of the many conspicuous objects that, either individually or collectively, may be used to build science concepts and reading background. Look more closely at any one of these tangible objects, and a multitude of less observable, but still very tangible, moving particles are to be found. Observe carefully grass or a tree. A variety of bugs may be found crawling on or under these common objects. What a wonderful opportunity to bring real meaning to a variety of words if a group of children were to have this experience and then return to the classroom to capitalize upon what they saw and heard.

The development of word meanings and word symbols after the

children return from a field trip to the more formal classroom is not just a one-way street for reading groups. The main problem is how to answer the questions which will pour forth from excited and interested children. How can the children further develop and broaden the science concept they have just touched upon through personal experience and observation? Many of the experiences necessary to answer the questions and develop the selected concept would be beyond the realm of childish experience; and, in addition, personal experience would probably be inaccurate or a waste of valuable time. It is here that the vast store of accurately prepared reading material becomes indispensable. The children will willingly search through almost any book, pamphlet, or magazine which holds promise of supplying desired information. During such reading both the children and I have a definite purpose in mind. Their purpose may be to find the answer to one very small question. My purpose is to broaden a science concept and develop reading skills. Both purposes may be accomplished if the appropriate materials are easily available to the children. One useful aid in selecting supplementary reading material is the bibliography of elementary reading for Grades 1, 2, 3, prepared by Knight (1) as one outcome of his study in this area.

### **Evaluating, Collecting, and Recording**

The nature of both science and reading is very complex. Both in-

volve problem solving. To assume or consider that science reading experiences include only vocabulary words and their recognition would be taking a very narrow interpretation of reading experience. Such a view would limit the meaning of science as well as the reading experiences sorely needed to develop a science concept.

Developing a science concept requires many of the techniques common to reading. Such processes as analyzing, evaluating, collecting, recording, organizing, and synthesizing information run through all science problem solving activities. The development of the ability to perform any one of these processes is the result of applying many individual skills. A few of the more important skills valuable to children as they attempt to carry out any of these processes of problem solving are: recognizing key ideas or words, selecting important or principal and less important or subsidiary points, identifying related and non-related ideas, locating information related to the problem, organizing related facts and ideas, evaluating, and summarizing. Regardless of whether children are reading, taking a field trip, or experimenting, they must actually use a variety of these individual skills in order to perform the processes of problem solving.

Clearly defined skills cannot be set up for each of the previously mentioned processes of problem solving, but a few illustrations from lesson plans might serve as examples. In the situation outlined above (the

children walking across the school-ground and using the reading material which had been previously selected for them), the key word is *moving*. However, moving is not necessarily the key idea. The key idea is self-motivated movement, or as the children said, "moving because it wanted to and without any help." The children were aware of the key words and key ideas and put their skill to work as they went through the processes of analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing in both the periods of observation and of reading. They not only had one more concrete experience in using an important skill, but they were very conscious of the specific skill they were using. The children looked for action and action words which would indicate whether the type of movement was a more important or a less important point for us. Thus, as the children carried out each specific activity on the schoolground and in the more formalized classroom situation, they were consciously using the skill of selecting more important and less important. This skill helped make it possible for the children to use the processes of evaluation, collecting, and recording.

### **Pictures and Diagrams**

Graphs, tables, charts, diagrams, drawings, pictures, maps, and similar materials are both essential and efficient tools for the elementary school child and it would be difficult to overemphasize their importance in the area of science. The ability to use these tools intelligently enhances the

child's ability to carry out such processes of problem solving as analyzing, evaluating, collecting, recording, organizing, and synthesizing information.

As with any tool, children need help and guidance in the functional use of the tools listed above. Ability to use such tools results from constructing or developing their own charts, graphs, and diagrams as they work through a problem, as well as from using intelligently the professionally prepared materials. Also, as with any other tool, the opportunities to practice need to be many and varied.

After the field trip previously mentioned, the children drew pictures and diagrams to show their interpretation of how things moved; and they looked at pictures and diagrams in their books, pamphlets, and periodicals. At first the pictures were discussed as being pretty, interesting, or noninteresting, but gradually the children began to identify the key words and key ideas: "moving" and "moving by itself." Thus they found out how to look at the pictures, and then they began to collect information to enrich and broaden our concept.

They discovered that diagrams were different from pictures. They were not what they were used to seeing: they were not pretty or interesting. The children had little ability to use a prepared diagram and no ability to make one. They discovered, however, how a "line picture" could help them find out, and how they could show to other



people, certain important ideas — such as what parts moved, the way they moved, how far they moved, what made them move, things that caused them to move. This is how we got into “thorax” in the beginning. Diagrams helped narrow the problem of moving, from a large number of things over a large space to individual movement through a short distance. Some children even voiced the opinion that pictures and diagrams may tell more than words when you know how to use them. Here again, as they were having experience with tools, they were broadening their concepts.

### **Charts and Tables**

Pictures and diagrams were not the only tools needed to develop their understanding. They are important tools to start with, as they are both easy to use, but charts and tables are also essential in helping to identify and emphasize key ideas, similarities, differences, and relationships. In charts and tables we could find concise lists, both in picture and word form, of “things that moved by themselves,” “had parts that would help them move by themselves,” or other characteristics we were looking for. After we found out how to recognize these key ideas and important points, we could start making our own charts and tables, and continue to develop greater understandings of both the tools and science. The children’s recognized purposes in making charts and tables were more limited than the teacher’s purposes. The children realized only

that the graphs and tables were an easy means of keeping a record, and a way of easily showing others their information.

### **Graphs and Maps**

Graphs and maps can help bring clearly into focus the relationships and effects which a child must learn to recognize. Listing, classifying, or naming may lead to easy memorization, and result in little or no understanding on the part of the child; but with each relationship or effect that is recognized, another little step has been taken toward understanding. Relationships and effects are more complex and less tangible than such things as key words, important and less important, similarities or differences.

It should be remembered, however, that graphs and maps may sometimes be very confusing and misleading to a child. In and of themselves they may call for an abstract type of thinking in terms of size, amount, time or distance. Children need to have many experiences in making, using and interpreting maps. The first maps should represent only where they have been and what they have seen. Using the school-ground excursion as an example, the maps first made represented the area we covered on the school ground, and small pictures identified what we had seen. Some things were close together while other things were far apart. Not everything could be placed on the same map, so we had to make different kinds of maps. Then we let word symbols take the

place of pictures so we could represent more things. The maps began to show size and distance when the road was made wider than the railroad tracks, and the rose bush where we found the grasshopper was placed twice as far from the school as the water puddle where we found the frog. Maps in books now began to tell many things. They could tell the children how far apart things were, how large things were, and where they could find things. With each new experience, maps became a more valuable tool of learning.

The use of picture, block, and linear graphs help children quickly recognize many important relationships. A graph comparing the size of animals and the distance moved quickly brought forth the conclusion, from the children, that the distance anything moves cannot be determined by its size. Picture graphs comparing the number of animals found in particular areas or environments quickly brought out the conclusion that animals prefer certain kinds of living conditions. The conclusions were not statements to parrot back from memory; they had

become a personal part of their own interpretation of the relationships.

Science is not reading, just as reading is not science. Both areas are probably more important today than they have ever been in man's history. The elementary school has a responsibility in building a reservoir of potential young scientists. It is the school's responsibility to further the children's interest in science, and also to help them develop the techniques, skills, and tools that they need in order to succeed as they progress from the simple to the complex.

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### From The Clip Sheet

Readers who do not have ready access to bookstores that stock a wide selection of paperbacks often are unaware of the wealth of reading material available to them and their students at small price. A wonderful catalog to browse through (I really

mean it fills one with wonder) indexes six thousand paperbacks by subject, title, and author. *Paperbound Books in Print*. R. R. Bowker Company, 62 West 45th St., New York 36, N. Y. \$2.00 for a single copy; \$3 with a year's supplements.

## What's Happening in Reading in Great Britain

by C. M. FLEMING

● THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

THE PERIOD is best described as one of activity coupled with hopefulness. Its keynote was sounded by the publication in 1957 of a report from the Ministry of Education of the results of a sampling survey of the tested literacy of English pupils in the years between 1948 and 1956 (1). This report showed a decided improvement over the record of the late 1940's—an over-all advance of about nine months in reading age at age eleven, and about five months at age fifteen, and a decrease in the numbers of illiterate and semi-literate pupils from 5 per cent to 1 per cent at eleven years of age, and from 6 per cent to 4 per cent at fifteen. Recovery from the educational handicap of evacuation and wartime conditions was not unnaturally most marked among younger children. However, the optimism engendered by the official recognition has been followed by lively concern on the part of teachers and parents with what is being read at all levels, with the provision and circulation of suitable materials, and with experimentation as to methods and devices for use both with the normal population and with those whose progress is disappointingly slow.

### Reading by Children and Adults

A survey of the reading habits of boys and girls organized by W. H. Smith and G. G. Harrap—two pub-

lishing firms—is typical of a large number of smaller enquiries published in journals such as the *School Librarian*, the *Use of English*, the *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, the *Journal of Education*, the *New Era* and the *Education Review*. The analysis of questionnaires from six thousand boys and girls between the ages of eleven and eighteen gives percentage figures for types of books favoured, method of choosing books, book buying, library membership, choice of newspapers and magazines and the like (2). Probably the most interesting conclusion which can be drawn refers to the extent of overlapping between the interests of boys and girls, and between those of children from various types of schools. Quite similar comments come from librarians in continuous contact with the reading preferences of children and adults (3)—especially when these are considered in their setting of the publication and sale of newsprint and the provision of mass entertainment through radio and television. Book production and purchase of newspapers are estimated as proportionately higher than in any other country, while the number of serious readers appears to have increased somewhat over the last thirty to forty years (4). Closely allied is the development of library services in industry and commerce (5).



### Aids to Teachers and Parents

Assistance to parents and teachers takes two main forms: a more generous provision of books (both in schools and in special sections of public libraries) and conferences arranged for librarians and for teachers by universities, training colleges, and local education authorities on the twin topics of librarianship and the teaching of reading. Groups of teachers are carrying out extended studies in centres such as London, Bristol, Oxford, Surrey, and Southampton; and courses in school librarianship have been developed in Cambridge, Glasgow, Edinburgh, London, Birmingham, and many other districts.

### Teaching Methods and Devices

A lively interest in teaching methods is fostered through professional journals such as the *Schoolmaster*, *School Librarian* and *School Library Review*, the *Journal of Education*, the *Times Educational Supplement*, and the publications of the area training organizations and university education departments in Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Hull, and Leeds.

Many of the methods reported are of the mixed pattern now traditional — with emphasis on introductory pictures, a limited vocabulary, reading for fun, and the provision of short sets of lively stories as supplementary reading material for pupils of specified reading ages. Little general use seems made of systematic phonic analysis at the earliest stages; but it is quite commonly admitted

that elementary instruction is necessary in the Junior as well as the Infant School; and Junior School teachers are being encouraged to undertake types of tuition formerly supposed to be suitable only for infants.

Indicative of a concern for guidance are the lists of books and periodicals produced by the School Library Association and the National Book League, and the independent surveys organized in connection with the in-service training of teachers. In five centres associated with the University of Bristol, groups of practicing teachers have, for example, recently completed an agreed set of nearly one hundred reviews of books or series of books for backward readers sponsored by thirty-two British publishers (6). These reviews give details of format, vocabulary, style, method of approach, rate of introduction of new words, length of sentence and paragraph, and type of content. They offer an appraisal in terms of the opinions of teachers who are actively engaged in work with pupils of chronological ages eight to fifteen. A report of this sort represents many months of continuous effort, and it is symptomatic of the enthusiasm which has contributed in no small measure to the reduction of the most obvious forms of reading retardation.

### Remedial Treatment

Much, however, still requires to be done at various levels; and deliberate attempts are being made to help children indirectly through

special full-time or part-time courses for teachers in Universities such as Glasgow, London, Nottingham, Cambridge, Reading, and Oxford. Associated with certain of these are centres for direct remedial treatment of the type organized by Pringle at Birmingham, and by the Local Education Authority in London (7).

Work with adult readers is also being undertaken through rapid-reading courses in connection with Universities (Edinburgh), Training Colleges (Aberdeen), Colleges of Technology (Cardiff), and Day Continuation Schools (8).

### Research

Accompanying all this there has been, over the same period, a notable increase of interest in the processes by which children begin to learn to read, and in the study of these processes in the light of modern interpretations of perception and of thinking.

In an unpublished Ph.D. thesis from Edinburgh University, MacKinnon, for example, gives an account of a series of investigations undertaken in schools, in which stress was being laid on a mixed method of approach including laboratory activities, phonic lessons, word-recognition lessons, and oral reading of stories from illustrated Infant Readers (9). Detailed recordings were made of the responses of a number of children to lessons given once a week both to individuals and to small cooperating groups using material (designed by Richards and Gibson) in which the content and

presentation of words in sentences were controlled in such a way as to reduce distraction and avoid rote learning and guessing. The author was able to demonstrate that both with beginners (three weeks at school) and with pupils who had already had instruction for five months the experimental groups made significantly greater advances than the control groups in ability to discriminate between the meanings of words on paper, and in language power as shown by definiteness of speech and thinking. Those pupils who worked in groups also made more progress than those who worked alone. This is an important study, pointing the way to other enquiries not only in the field of reading but in the relating of classroom procedures more closely to what is known of the social psychology of learning.

A full statement of relevant researches in this field has in these same months been offered by M. D. Vernon in a book entitled *Backwardness in Reading*. Its experimental emphasis is on somewhat older pupils; but it is significant both in the ground it covers and in its treatment of the topic in the light of contemporary evidence on perceptual processes (10).

Quite in line with these interpretations but less clearly related to modern learning theory is the work which has for some years been in progress at Nottingham University under the supervision of Daniels and Diack (11). This, like the Harvard Studies developed by MacKinnon

at Edinburgh, represents a protest against the lack of clarity of purpose characteristic of many recent forms of the sentence-method of approach. The latter as proposed by its originators did not exclude attention to the fact that letters stand for sounds, that their order is significant, and that in translating these symbols the reader will discover meaning. As used by many teachers it has, however, become ancillary to the supposition that learning is incidental, that teachers should refrain from premature stimulation and that in the process of natural development errors and bewilderment will disappear without undue effort on the part of the teacher—to a degree determined by the innate aptitude of each child. In protest against this, the Nottingham research group offer material so arranged as to give early training in accurate visual perception and in the reading of words of regular phonic pattern in left-to-right order; and enquiries are in progress to extend earlier experiments with backward Junior School pupils to a comparative study of children taught for one year in the Infant School by the "phonic-word" method in contrast to those taught by "mixed" methods in which a phonic approach is incidental.

Supplementary to these research enquiries, but more capable of use with reading material of less closely controlled types, is a series of ingenious card devices and "reading machines" designed by Morris of the University of Durham to encourage discovery of the use of the letters of

the alphabet and to present word-building not as an exercise in reading and spelling, but as a means of operating a machine in which a picture lights up when the correct letters are dialled (12). The efficacy of these devices is not established by analysis of the work of comparative groups; but Morris's presentation of his topic is both persuasive and lucid.

From all these approaches—experimental and anecdotal—what seems to be in recent months most clearly established is the complexity of the process of reading, in which, as in the comparable task of learning to perceive, both stimulus and response are now known to have a greater complexity than was formerly supposed. Learning is least accurate with ambiguous material (lines or words of similar length, patterns of vague form and the like), and the task of the teacher of reading is to undertake as thorough an analysis of the process as that already characteristic of the study of the beginnings of number (13). Pupils faced with books are presented with words, phrases, syllables, and letters simultaneously; and while it is wise to make early introduction of the notion that printed symbols carry meaning, the vocabulary to be studied cannot usefully be determined by such "external" criteria as hypothetical "children's interests," objective "word counts" or even perceptual differences in length of words.

Special interest attaches to a forthcoming report from the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales. From

a survey of over eight thousand pupils, attending fifty-nine primary schools, a study is being made of differences in the test performance of children aged seven to eleven years as related to differences in the amount of formal teaching and in the methods used at the infant level, along with differences in the size of classes and the size of schools at the primary stage, in the socio-economic level of the area, the type of school building, and the pupils' residence in town or country. All these factors are probably of some significance, and this further authoritative report on their relationships is eagerly awaited.

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### CONFERENCE NOTES

*Atlantic City, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, February 16, 17, 18.* Joint meeting of the IRA and the American Association of School Administrators. *Theme:* Reading for Today's Curriculum. *Chairman:* Helen M. Robinson.

*Atlantic City, Tuesday, February 17.* Joint meeting of the IRA with the American Educational Research Association. *Theme:* Research in Reading and the Other Language Arts. *Chairman:* Arthur Traxler.

*Cincinnati, Sunday, March 1.* Associated meeting, IRA and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. *Chairman:* Margaret Wasson.

*Atlantic City, Thursday, April 2.* Joint Session, IRA with the National Science Teachers Association. *Chairman:* E. Elona Socher.







# PARTIAL LIST OF HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS IN TORONTO

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3	King Edw'd Sheraton	8.50	12.50	13.50	10	Westbury	9.50	12.50	12.50
2	Lord Simcoe	7.50	11.50	12.00	8	Windsor Arms	7.00	11.00	11.00
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# Fourth Annual Conference of the International Reading Association

MAY 1 AND 2, 1959

Toronto, Canada

Convention Headquarters — Royal York Hotel

Theme: Reading in a Changing Society

## TENTATIVE CONDENSED SCHEDULE

Thursday	April...30	9:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.	School and Clinic Visits
		7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.	Registration
Friday	May 1	8:00 A.M. - 8:00 P.M.	Registration
		9:30 A.M. - 12:00 M.	Opening General Session
		1:45 P.M. - 3:45 P.M.	Sectional Meetings: <i>Implications of a Changing Society for Present</i>

8:00 A.M. - 10:00 A.M. Registration

1:45 P.M. - 3:45 P.M. Sectional Meetings: *Implications of a Changing Society for Present*

Saturday May 2

8:00 A.M. - 10:00 A.M. Registration

9:00 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Sectional Meetings: *Experimental Procedures Significant for Future Trends in Reading Instruction*

12:00 M. - 2:00 P.M. Luncheon

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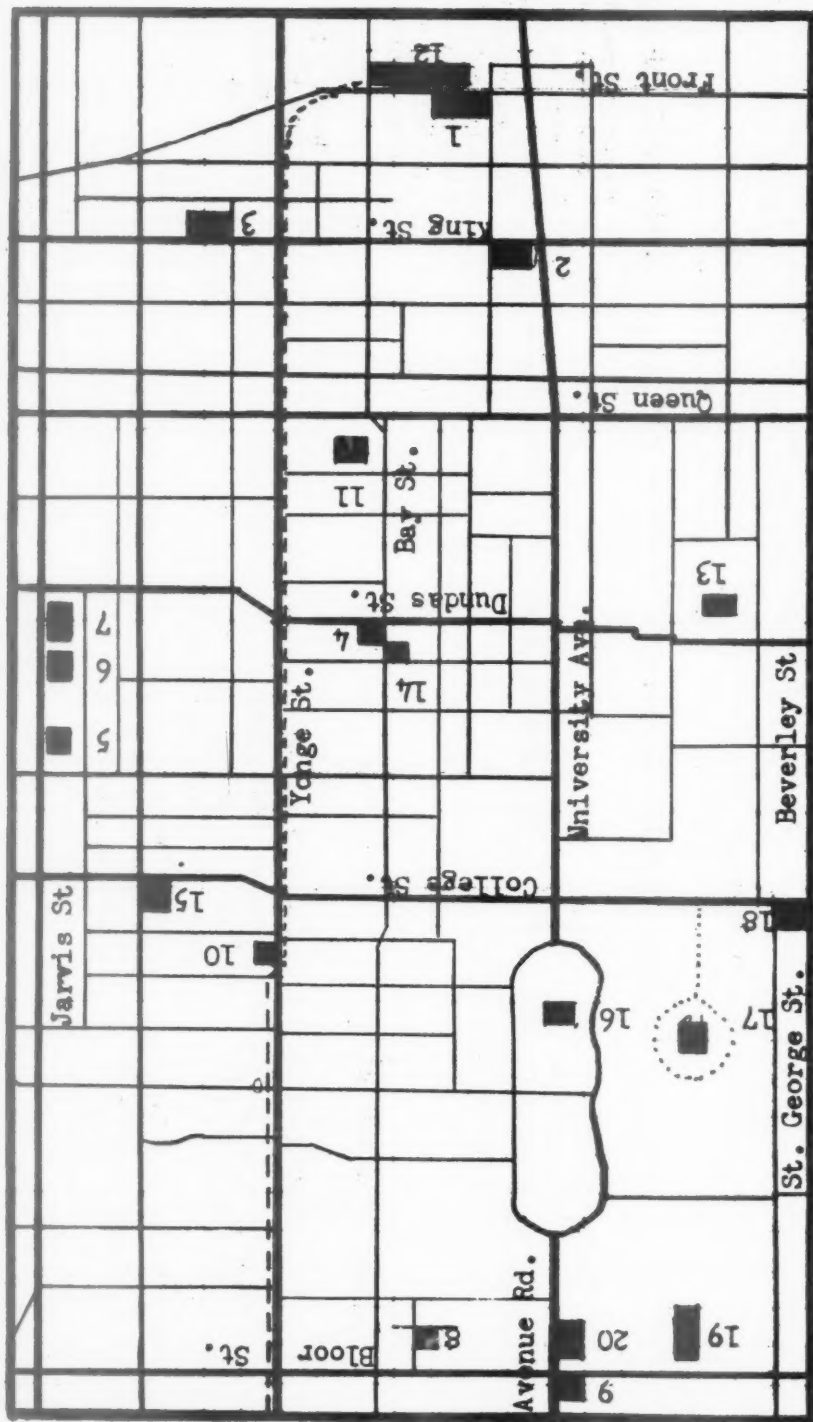
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17. University of Toronto

18. Reference Library

19. Varsity Stadium



# The Special Reading Services of the New York City Board of Education

by MARGARETTA W. FITE

● AND

MARGARET M. MOSHER

SPECIAL READING SERVICES

## PART II—THE CLINICAL PROGRAM

PART I of this article gave an overview of the program for children with reading disability.\* It included considerable detail regarding the instructional program, whereas Part II focuses upon the work of the clinical teams.

In each center the clinical staff consists of a psychologist, a psychiatric social worker, and a part-time psychiatrist. The social worker and the psychologist work closely with the reading counselors in the selection of new children. Before a child is admitted to the Special Reading Services program, the parent is interviewed by the social worker and an initial psychological study is made of the child. Findings are then reviewed with the counselor to determine whether the child meets the criteria of selection. Further diagnostic studies are made of the children after they are in the reading program. The social worker also continues to see the parents as problems arise. The child's adjustment as reported by the reading counselor

largely determines the extent of the clinical service. Many children adjust with this amount of clinical help, combined with the therapeutic handling by the reading counselor. An important factor is the holding of regular conferences between the clinical workers and the reading counselor.

For children who do not respond satisfactorily, a complete study is made by the three members of the clinic team. Selection of a child for full study is based on: (1) the extent of his problems in the group as observed by the reading counselor; (2) the findings of the psychological study; and (3) the problem as reported by the parent, together with the amount of insight and cooperation which, in the judgment of the social worker, can be expected of the family. After the clinical study is completed, a diagnostic conference is conducted by the psychiatrist for the purpose of integrating the findings. Recommendations are then discussed with the reading counselor. A number of these children need individual or group therapy.

The clinic teams have regular treatment programs for a few selected children and their parents. In addition, the Brooklyn clinic con-

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\*Part I, by Stella M. Cohn, appeared in the December, 1958 issue of the *READING TEACHER*. Part II has been written by, respectively, a psychologist and a psychiatric social worker on the staff of Special Services, with the editorial assistance of Stella M. Cohn, Administrator.

ducts group therapy programs for mothers and children. Close contact is maintained among the members of the team.

In order to illustrate the extent and severity of the problems of the children, the clinic team of the Manhattan Center analyzed the findings in the first thirty-five cases given full study.\* Available for this purpose were the confidential case records which contain the social history, the psychological findings (including the results of projective testing, as well as measurements of the intellectual functioning), and the report of the psychiatric examination. Prior to the case analysis each child's response in the reading room had been fully reported by his reading counselor. Other data taken into account were the school records, the class teacher's observations, and the results of examinations by the pediatrician, the ophthalmologist, and the speech teacher.

Before considering the clinical findings in detail, it is of interest to note that of these 35 retarded readers, 29 were boys, a proportionately greater number of boys than in the total Special Reading Services program, where the ratio has been approximately two boys to one girl. At the time of the clinical study 27 children were in the fourth grade, seven in the fifth, and one in the second grade. Their intelligence quotients, as obtained on individual examination, ranged from 80 to 129, with the median at 102.9. The chil-

dren were severely maladjusted educationally. Fifteen (43 per cent) showed both reading and arithmetic difficulties, and the other 20 (57 per cent) had more extensive disability in reading than in other subjects. Very few of these children enjoyed any academic achievement.

The clinical findings were grouped under the following categories: (1) symptoms of disturbance in the children, (2) problems within the family, (3) situational factors in regard to early school experiences, and (4) adverse physical and developmental findings. The tabulated data showed that many of these factors were common to a majority of the thirty-five children. However, no two cases were identical; and in no instance was the reading retardation the only problem.

The accompanying tables present the incidence of problems and other adverse factors in the thirty-five cases of reading disability. In Table 1 it will be seen that there were many

TABLE 1  
SYMPTOMS OF DISTURBANCE

Symptom	No.	Per Cent
Excessive anxiety	35	100
Severe sibling rivalry	31	89
Fears	28	80
Distractibility	25	71
Daydreaming	24	69
Depressive tendencies	23	66
Hyperactivity	17	49
Defective speech	17	49
Disruptive behavior	16	46
Infantile behavior	16	46
Aggression	13	37
Impulsivity	13	37
Enuresis	10	29

\*Dr. Jerome S. Silverman, psychiatrist formerly with the Special Reading Services, participated in the analysis of the cases and in the interpretation of the findings.

symptoms of maladjustment in the children. Reading failure in itself is a very serious problem; but these

children were also carrying a load of many other unsolved problems.

Additional insight into the difficulties of the children may be gained by a consideration of the problems found within their families (Table 2). In thirty-four of the cases there were disturbed mother-child relationships. Severe marital difficulty was also present in the families of twenty-three children. Mental illness, including four cases of alcoholism, was found in twenty parents. Nineteen mothers gave accounts of their own childhood which indicated that they themselves had experienced early emotional deprivation.

TABLE 2  
PROBLEMS WITHIN THE FAMILY

<i>Problem</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Disturbed mother-child relationships	34	97
Severe marital discord	23	66
Mental illness of parent, inc. four alcoholics	20	57
Early emotional deprivation of parents	19	54
Unsuitable sleeping arrangements	16	46
School learning problems of parents	12	34
School learning problems of siblings	10	29
Mother working, supervision inadequate	11	31
Father absent from home	8	23

One factor noted in the psychiatric case work was a tendency of mothers to disparage fathers. Such an attitude is perceived by the child, tends to upset him, and leads to further conflict. A fear of mental retardation was expressed frequently. When the child fails to respond to the pressure which is applied by the parent, the mother often becomes angry and discouraged. She may

turn to a younger sibling, expressing the expectation that this child will be successful in school. In this way the sibling rivalry pattern, found so consistently in this group, is intensified and perpetuated. Many children in our program feel rejected. For instance, a number of the children did not know their own birthdays. The family apparently did not realize the psychological importance of a child's birthday, and never celebrated it.

A dependency pattern which has been fostered by the mother is another frequent finding. The reading counselor in one school, upon meeting a child for the first time, noted that this nine-year-old boy asked her to "carry me." The mother of such a child requires considerable support from the social worker to permit the child to grow up. Many of the children have shown feeding problems. These include refusal to eat, insistence upon being fed, periodic aversions to food, food fads, regurgitation of food prior to going to school, nausea, and, in several of our thirty-five children, overeating leading to obesity. Mothers gave evidence of conflict in regard to feeding habits and problems.

An eating problem frequently has its counterpart in the daily school life of the child. Among the thirty-five severely disturbed children are many who make no effort to learn or digest learning, but still need to be "spoon fed" with tender care. Incidentally, it is of interest that marked "dependency upon others for the solution of their problems" was a characteristic found to a statistically significant



degree among fifty of our reading disability children, whose initial psychological examinations included use of Rosenzweig's Picture Frustration Test.

A vital aspect of growing up which presents problems for parents of these children, particularly, is the development of the child's natural curiosity. The interviews by the psychiatric case worker revealed that most of the mothers were frightened and troubled when the child asked questions about natural processes such as birth and death. The insecure parent did not know how to answer and could not say so. The overintellectual parent answered the questions, but in a stilted, unfeeling, unsatisfying manner. This was particularly true when the child showed curiosity about sexuality. Yet reference to Table 2 will show that sixteen of the thirty-five children (46 per cent) had unsuitable sleeping arrangements (i.e., sleeping in the room with a parent, an adult relative, or a sibling of the opposite sex). Instead of being able to help the child with answers to questions, the reluctant parent imposed upon him a sense of shame regarding curiosity and fostered in the child the conclusion that one must not look or ask questions. It is thought that this same feeling of prohibition against looking, seeing, and asking questions permeates the child's attitude toward learning in school.

Moreover, it seems probable that these reading disability children first entered school with far less eagerness and expectation of success than did

their classmates who made normal progress. Yet, unfortunately, almost half the group (sixteen) did not begin school with kindergarten, but went directly to first grade. For a record of these and other situational factors having a bearing on early school experiences, see Table 3.

TABLE 3  
SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND EARLY  
SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

<i>Factor</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Child's references to unpleasant experiences.....	29	83
Excessive absences.....	25	71
CA below six years at entrance to first grade.....	21	60
Frightening experiences.....	21	60
School changes.....	17	49
No kindergarten experience.....	16	46
Language problems in bilingual homes.....	10	29
Repetition of grades.....	8	23

These were not overage children, for twenty-one of them (60 per cent) had not reached the age of six years when they entered the first grade.

Other disturbing experiences—as far as early school learning is concerned—are reflected in the excessive absences (71 per cent), numerous school changes (49 per cent), and repetition of grades (23 per cent) among the total group. Moreover, ten children, though English-speaking when taken into Special Reading Services, came from bilingual homes. It is recognized that bilingual homes may represent a cultural asset in families where the emotional climate is normal; but in the disturbed situations predominating in our group, the burden of two languages is another real handicap to the children.

The physical histories of the children present an interesting picture (Table 4). Among the thirty-five,

TABLE 4  
ADVERSE PHYSICAL AND  
DEVELOPMENTAL FINDINGS

<i>Finding</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Traumata in first year.....	18	51
Growth deviations.....	16	46
Severe illness in early childhood.....	15	43
Problems of handedness.....	15	43
Visual defects.....	15	43
Operations.....	14	41
Prematurity.....	9	26
Accidents.....	9	26
Delayed speech.....	6	17
Ear infections.....	5	14
History of convulsions.....	3	9

we find nine prematurely born (an unusually high number), two "celiac" babies, one child with persisting "colic," one RH-positive baby, and two infants for whom forced feeding was necessary. In addition, there are many who suffered from accidents which had unfortunate consequences. For example, one child, later found to need strong glasses because of nearsightedness, vividly recounted an accident in which he ran his bicycle into a tree when being forced by his mother to learn to ride. Eighteen children are recorded as having undergone traumata in the first year, as: cessation of walking for some months after an illness or a fall, inability to retain food for several weeks after drinking poison by mistake, intravenous feeding because of illness or rejection of food. Though these children are now in generally healthy physical condition, the significance of these disturbances is in the attitudes of anxiety which the

parents have retained concerning the children. Many mothers still tend to overprotect them.

For several children there were specific recommendations for medical follow-up, because of a variety of conditions. Fifteen of the thirty-five are listed on the chart as having visual deficiency. Other eye defects were present. For example, one girl had a ptosis since birth, and although there was no need for glasses, it can be assumed from her reactions that the defect interfered with her emotional development. One problem which the psychiatric case worker has had to deal with is the negative attitude of many mothers toward the ophthalmological examination. Some mothers felt that the wearing of glasses, especially for girls, would detract from the children's appearance.

Table 4 shows also that in sixteen children (46 per cent) there were deviations from normal physical growth patterns. Nine were very small for their age, and in seven there was marked acceleration of growth. This rapid growth in three cases involved extremely early beginnings of sexual maturation (one boy and two girls). Fifteen among the thirty-five (43 per cent) had difficulties in establishing handedness.

In the case of those using the left hand predominantly, there was evidence of a great deal of parental pressure to use the right hand. One father even undertook such retraining toward right-handedness after the boy had been writing and drawing with his left hand up to the age of eleven years. In a few other chil-

dren dominance did not seem clearly established; in formal tests there was evidence of confusion in knowledge of right and left and also "mixed" results, suggesting that the hand used might not be the naturally dominant one.

The clinical staff members of Special Reading Services have felt that the study of thirty-five children with severe reading and emotional problems has had importance in pointing to constellations of factors in typical cases. The clinic staff plans to continue to study the "hard core"

cases and also to isolate, if possible, the positive factors which are associated with rate of improvement in reading. Many unsolved problems remain. For example, there is the puzzling question of why there should be so many boys and so few girls who have severe reading disabilities. It is thought that a persisting research approach to these important questions on the part of various workers in this field ought to lead to increased understanding and also greater effectiveness in methods of handling the children.

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## Picture-Story Books at Their Best

by LELAND B. JACOBS  
● TEACHERS COLLEGE  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

PICTURE-STORY books help a child to come into his literary heritage. They induct him into the wonder and splendor of the world of books. They stimulate him visually at a time when the visual stimulation for reading is so important. They make the "feel" of a page of print and of total book format appealing. They bring the pleasures of print as verbal content—as stimulation of the imagination—to the young book consumer. In content, be it story or information, in illustration, in the art of bookmaking, picture-story books are the very pulse of the development of children as readers. Developmental, basic reading is reading for enjoyment and knowledge and wis-

dom. Meanings are the urgency of the reading act. To the extent that picture-story books give young readers enjoyment and knowledge and truth, such books become basic in inducting the child into his culture through books.

There is no shortage of picture-story books in America today. Not all of them are top flight, of course. Some, unfortunately, are only mediocre. But on the whole, the writers and illustrators who work in this field of literary endeavor are sincere, dedicated people who, if they fail to produce great works, miss the mark not out of neglect but rather out of their lack of the cutting edge of great imagination, or of the sure

control of their craft. At best, there are no books in America today that are more sensitively developed than the finest of our picture-story books.

The best of our picture-story books are marked by originality, integrity, validity, simplicity, and beauty. These are big words to apply to the child's first books, but nonetheless they are truly applicable. In fact, without these ingredients a picture-story book is not "best."

Let us look at originality first. To be original is not to be cute, or trite, or hackneyed, or contrived, or precious, or crude, or sentimental, or falsely childish. To be original is to meet the child with an idea in which the basic symbols employed are inviolably childlike in conception and execution. Originality in picture-story books is rooted in the sensitive perception of what is real and what is significant to the young child as he stretches to become a bit better informed and wiser and more mature through his associations with his books. Originality must be rooted in basic human concerns—the concerns of love, of acceptance, of approval, of security, of seeking, of testing out the dimensions of the world in which one, while young, lives. The original writer, then, finds his meanings in something far deeper than his adult memories of childhood. He probes the essence of childhood. Thus his content is original not because his contrivances in writing are neat and orderly, but because his content forms itself in words and sequences that find their order in the true meanings of how a child thinks,

feels, reacts. His book becomes original as a semblance of life because his literary symbols square with the intrinsic meanings of child living itself.\*

If this all seems somewhat mystical and elusive, then, perhaps, in a way it is. Many of the distinguished writers for young children are unable to communicate precisely about their own creative processes. But in their work one can see not only superb craftsmanship, which they can discuss rather well; there is also a sure sensing of and feeling for the kinds of experiencing which a child, as a consumer of a book, will comprehend and respect.

Fine picture-story books have integrity. They are faithful, in their content, to the spirit and the semblance of life being portrayed. Pretence is given no quarter. What they are, they are without sham or guilt or subterfuge. If the spirit is light and playful, if robust or somewhat earthy, if magical, if innocently grotesque, it is so with no apologies, no condescension, and certainly no didacticism. The writer's respect for his young audience is so great that he is forthright with them, revealing his intent at the very beginning of his content. Only thus is the young reader able to enter fundamentally into the spirit of the author's creation. The young must trust the writer; the writer must earn such trust.

\*For interesting discussions of writers' ways of working, see *Newbery Medal Books: 1922-55* (Boston: The Horn Book, Inc., 1955), edited by Bertha Mahoney Miller and Elinor Whitney Field. See particularly the acceptance paper of Meindert De Jong.

Picture-story books with integrity do not manipulate life to sentimental ends. Perhaps there is a fine distinction between sentimentality and honest sentiment, but nonetheless that difference is major. The sentimental is too tender, affected, mawkish, excessive, artificial, and thus false to life. Sentimental content is unfair to children. It encourages children in a susceptibility to untoward romance. Sentimental content indulges the reader in stereotyped and superficial responses to vital life meanings.

Honest sentiment, on the other hand, is true to life. It evokes from the young reader feelings that are deep and sincere, refined and discriminative. The emotional overtones are strong, with a strength that arises from a genuine responsiveness to what is forceful, sustaining, and essential in life. Honest sentiment eschews extravagances. It has a restraint born of taste, of what is fitting and harmonious. The reader is not moved emotionally because the author, with affectation, contrives to move the reader. Rather, the reader is moved because the content is so satisfying and precisely right that the reader must be involved emotionally.

Validity is another hallmark of our finest picture-story books. They are true to the fact or fiction which they would convey. They are well grounded in whatever information and knowledge is necessary in the telling of the content, and well founded in the central thought and total meaning of the book as an entity. The best picture-story books

are convincing because they are products of well-informed, disciplined, creative minds. The informed and disciplined mind of a creative writer of picture-story books may not be of the conventional mold. It may well be that the perceptions and sensitivities of such writers transcend the usual, mundane premises of other folks. But even when their very approaches to what is commonplace and ordinary are extraordinary, they remain steadfastly true to what can be supported by the facts and information in their content and by the beliefs which they hold. The soundness of their conclusions, the values which are implicit are never shabby or insincere. They look at life penetratingly, and in their writing create a semblance of that life which, to them, bears close scrutiny and is not found wanting. While one might disagree with their choice of information, their values, their beliefs and ideals, one cannot, in the best picture-story books, disagree with the cogency of their work, given what they know and believe.

Fanciful literature for the young has its own validity. It must produce its own beliefs, founded on convincing impossibilities, impracticalities, or preternatural elements. It must propose and sustain its own logic. Even nonsense must make sense in its own nonsensical way. However the writer of fancy may rearrange, reconstruct, or revamp the realities of existence, the conclusions which he reaches and proposes for the young reader must be supported by the sure, well-rounded development



of his imaginings. The young reader must be able to believe with the writer; only then will the fanciful become, for a moment, the real.

Our best picture-story books have about them a magnificent simplicity. They are not cluttered with the superfluous, nor are they skeletal, mere frameworks devoid of flesh and blood. Instead, their content is so structured that just the right amount of supporting detail is included to give a satisfying fullness to the verbal sequence and to summon up appropriate reactions. What intricacies of idea or designing there may be are present because such are essential to the emergence of climax in the content. What divisions into parts there are flow one into another with neat transitions, with unimpaired continuity. Those complexities of human behavior and truth which must necessarily be proposed for the full development of the content are so presented that they are free from ambiguity or pretension.

In outstanding picture-story books, a forthrightness of presentation is apparent. There is a delightful sense of form which, in and of itself, communicates the spirit of the work. There is a steadily developing feeling of anticipation for outcome and consequence. There is precision and pleasure in choices of words, phrases, and expressions and refrains.

The very grandeur of simplicity in picture-story books may be, at times, deceptive. The content appears to be so lacking in lustre and adornment that the inherent aesthetic quality is missed, overlooked by the

uncritical eye, the insensitive ear. But the grandeur is there, so plainly there that what seems easy and innocent has been wrought, really, only with superb imagination and consummate skill.

Beauty is inherent in our best picture-story books — the beauty of the idea, the spirit, the flow of words upon the printed page. It is the beauty of the feelings communicated, the beauty of the confirmation and extension of one's experiences. It is the piercing of one's outer skin with pictures and perceptions called forth by the content. It is the beauty of craft, the deft handling of the tool of language. To the extent that a writer, in his picture-story book, approaches complete harmony in communicating feelings and form, idea and style, to that extent he has produced not just expertly but truly beautifully.

In an advertisement by Simon and Schuster, Publishers, in the *New York Times* for Sunday, November 16, 1958, appeared these lines: "Only in a book can you give your child the moon. Or his future." Picture-story books — the best of them — are "many moons." They are the young child's "todays and tomorrows" in reading. If adults choose wisely for the young, picture-story books are "todays and tomorrows" and "many moons" that make a difference in his life as a reader because he comes early to know that the peaks of pleasure and promise in reading are those that tower in originality, integrity, validity, simplicity, and beauty.

# What RESEARCH Says to the Reading Teacher

BY

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## Research in the IRA—Part 2

*Note:* This issue presents the second installment of the list of entries sent to the Committee on Studies and Research of the IRA during 1957-58.

The first installment, published in the December issue, consisted of annotations of studies under the heading of Reading Methods and Materials. The following annotations are given under five headings, as shown below. The remaining studies will be annotated in the April issue of this journal.

### Reading Readiness and Beginning Reading

BECKER, JAMES W., State Teachers College, Millersville, Penna. A study of factors associated with reading readiness among 51 six-year-old first-grade pupils.

HAMPLEMAN, RICHARD S., North Texas State College, Denton, Texas. Found a statistically significant difference between mean reading achievement of sixth-grade pupils who entered first grade at age six years, four months or more, over sixth graders whose first grade entrance age was six years, three months or less.

HAYES, MARY THERESA, Boston

University School of Education, Boston, Mass. Developed tests for grades two and three to show direct comparison between reading and listening comprehension, as well as a third which can be used as a reading or listening test to measure increments of learning.

KOONTZ, Mrs. EUNICE, Rt. 3, Newark, Ohio. To discover whether certain factors, such as vision, hearing, general health, school entrance age, kindergarten attendance, mobility of family, and parents' education and occupation, had significant influence on reading ability. Results from interviews with poor readers in primary grades and their teachers suggest that many of these children do not have the right conception of reading or learning to read.

MALMQUIST, EVE, The State School for Educational Research, Linköping, Sweden. A study of factors related to reading disabilities in the first grade of the elementary school. Doctor's thesis, Pp. 428. Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1958.

ROBERTS, ELIZABETH A., 3 Blackstone Pl., New York 71, N. Y. To find the correlation of reading readiness, home background and subsequent reading achievement. Obser-

vation of children in kindergarten and grade one, reading readiness and personality test results, interviews with parents, and data on emotional stability, health, and social adjustment. Plans home visits and questionnaires for parents. Plans include follow-up study. Entire survey will probably require several years.

SIMMONS, MRS. MARGARET J., 512 Calloway Dr., Raleigh, N. C. To determine the value of a pre-school clinic in a rural community. Clinic will continue throughout the summer.

STEWART, TRUNELLA, 1409 North Oak, Bloomington, Ill. Results of group and individual intelligence and reading readiness tests of five- and six-year-olds indicate pattern of immaturity contrary to accepted "readiness workbook" procedures.

VITEK, MRS. ESTHER C., 447 Metacomber, Bristol, R. I. A series of graded exercises developed to build auditory and visual discrimination of kindergarten children. Incidental and intensive learning compared. Intensive training in auditory and visual discrimination of word and letter forms was of value.

### **Physiological Aspects of Reading**

HINDS, LILLIAN R., 447 E. St. Joseph Way, Phoenix, Ariz. (With the cooperation of Lois Bing, Cleveland, Ohio.) Found a positive correlation between functional visual disabilities and reading disabilities. Also found that adjustments could be made in teaching approach which would compensate for the visual disabilities.

LEVENSON, MRS. SYLVIA P., 8712 Leonard Dr., Silver Spring, Md. To ascertain effect of maturation on reading achievement, dominance, vision, ability to copy certain geometric figures, and reversal tendencies. Preliminary results now available.

MAZOR, PEARL D., 194 Smith St., Freeport, N. Y. Survey of reading disability cases for handedness, eyedness, footedness, mixed eye-hand dominance, as well as handwriting check to determine page position, hand position, and pencil position. Preliminary findings indicate large number of cases of left-handedness, mixed dominance, and some speech defects. Also found that no left-handed pupil studied had received special handwriting instruction.

MCCRACKEN, ROBERT A., Reading Laboratory, Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Ind. Investigations of the effect of defective accommodation of the eye as related to inability to learn to read comfortably. Correction involves bifocal lens fitting. Five children in Grades 2-7 have been identified so far, and tutoring at the clinic has proved successful.

ROSEN, MRS. JANET, 3140 South Michigan Ave., Chicago 16, Ill. Reviewing the literature on vision and reading to (a) see what relationship exists between the two, (b) discuss the means by which teachers can identify visual problems in the classrooms, (c) examine and evaluate visual screening programs in the school, and (d) discuss what contributions vision consultants have made to the reading program and how and

why the vision specialist and the reading teacher should work together.

SOLON, HAROLD A., 1187 Grand Concourse, Bronx 52, N. Y. To relate a number of ocular complaints, poor study habits, and academic difficulties to visual deficiencies. Has found significant relationship between academic difficulties and functional eye deficiencies.

WALTON, Dr. HOWARD N., Los Angeles College of Optometry, 950 West Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. Found duration of fixation varies among individuals when comprehension is not a factor, just as it does when comprehension is a factor.

### **Remedial Reading**

BROWN, NELLIE MAE, 11 Terrace Circle, Great Neck, N. Y. Use of creative writing to study the potential intelligence level and learning rates of remedial reading pupils in Grades 2-6.

COHEN, MRS. EDNA LEVIN, Cleveland Junior High School, Loomis St., Elizabeth, N. J. To determine whether it is possible to remedy reading disabilities of average-sized class (29) of seventh graders of normal intelligence but low reading proficiency, within the Unified Studies Program. Results favorable towards reading improvement.

LIPTON, AARON, Reading Coordinator, District 8, 33 Hillside Ave., White Plains, N. Y. Controlled experiment to determine the effectiveness of a summer remedial reading program for Grades 2-6 as it relates to the reading level loss apparent in poor readers.

MARTIN, JOHN, and RAY, J. B., Special Services, Ft. Hays, Kansas State College, Hays, Kan. To demonstrate attitudinal change in retarded readers of normal intelligence following intensive individualized remedial reading instruction. Improved personality adjustment is expected.

MILLER, DOROTHY E., 37 Central Ave., Dalton, Mass. To determine whether the kinesthetic-tactile method or the auditory-visual method of word recognition is more appropriate for third, fourth, and fifth grade retarded readers of normal intelligence. Immediate gains found to be greater with auditory-visual, but retention better with kinesthetic-tactile. Children seemed to prefer auditory-visual method.

MILLER, MRS. HELEN RAND, 542 46th Ave., San Francisco 21, Calif. Primary interest: how do children with reading problems acquire adequate reading skills? Clinical work carried out during school year and through summer in Reading Workshop.

RUSSELL, MILTON, 1409 Glenwood Rd., Brooklyn 30, N. Y. A controlled study to discover whether group counseling of the mothers of retarded readers contributes towards improving the reading skill of the children.

### **Reading Interests**

ADDY, MARTHA L., and MAC-CROCKETT, MRS. KITTIE. (Children's Librarian) Eastern Oregon College, La Grande, Ore. A study of the growth of recreatory reading interest

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of elementary school children.

CRONIN, SISTER EILEEN MARIE, S.N.J.M., Reading Director, College of the Holy Names, 3500 Mountain Blvd., Oakland 19, Calif. Survey of reading interests of Mexican-American children in intermediate grades revealed a basic preference in books according to child nature at different periods of age and growth. However, certain general favorites of English-speaking children (such as *Little Women* and *Robin Hood*) seemed to lack appeal.

LABRANT, LOU, Dillard University, New Orleans, La. A follow-up study of the reading habits of adults seventeen years after an experimental individualized program at high school level. Reading of these high school graduates exceeds national college norms in both book and periodical consumption.

VAN GILDER, LESTER L., 9400 West Beloit Rd., Milwaukee 19, Wis. Study to discover whether college grade-point average can be predicted by admitted leisure-time use of communications media. Use of five independent variables (speed, two measures of comprehension, magazine and novel preferences) resulted in  $r$  of .817.

#### **Reading and Personal and Social Adjustment**

DE PAZZI, SISTER MARY (Dean of Instruction), and PETER, SISTER MARY (Psychologist), Reading Laboratory, Catherine McAuley Junior College, 1437 Blossom Rd., Rochester 10, N. Y. A study of the close relationship of personality and suc-

cess in reading in Grades 2 to 12.

DOUGLAS, Mrs. WALDRON W., Special Teacher, University of Minnesota Hospitals, Minneapolis, Minn. To determine whether the range of reading ability in hospital-run classes for the emotionally disturbed resembles that of the average class, and whether, as a group, these children are more proficient in reading than in spelling or arithmetic. Range of reading ability appears wider than that in normal classrooms, although the emotionally disturbed child has far more reading ability than is commonly realized. There is a statistically significant difference between the means of achievement in reading and arithmetic and reading and spelling.

JARVIS, Mrs. VIVIAN, 89 South Ocean Avenue, Freeport, N. Y. Individual psychoanalytically-oriented psychotherapy with elementary school pupils who exhibit reading disability as a symptom in order to determine the nature of emotional difficulties present.

LANGMAN, MURIEL P., Hawthorne Center, Haggerty Rd., Northville, Mich. Using children in public schools and mental hospitals, plans to study the nature of reading disability in extreme disability cases.

LETTON, MILDRED C., Department of Education, University of Chicago, Chicago 37, Ill. To discover nature of interpretive process when material read is poetry. In Grade 9, better readers differ significantly from poorer readers in grasping literal meaning and in

(Continued on Page 207)



## What Other Magazines Say About READING

BY

**MURIEL POTTER LANGMAN**

*Hawthorn Center, Northville, Michigan*

GILLIE, PAUL J. "A Simplified Formula for Measuring Abstraction in Writing." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 1957.

This article adds a dimension to the measure of readability by describing a procedure in which 200-word samples may be evaluated as abstract or concrete instead of difficult or easy, the goal of earlier formulas. The derivation of the formula and a six-step plan of evaluation are given. Abstractness is inversely related to score, i.e., the lower the numerical score obtained by the formula, the more abstract the material.

FERRERIO, ANTHONY J. "Use of the Industrial Arts in the Remedial Reading Program." *High Points* (Board of Education, New York City Schools), May, 1958.

Written directions represent an essential reading skill in the industrial arts shop. A child who can read and follow them has tangible evidence of success. He can pace himself, and words and phrases learned in shop pay off at once. In the Dewey Junior High School in New York City, exercises for retarded readers use shop content, including use of tools, care of equipment, good work habits, steps in a process, and safety rules. Names of materials are learned by matching the materials with their names on word

cards. Other techniques include labeling objects and pictures in the room, carrying out simple printed directions, matching illustrations with directions, using riddles based on a tool or process, etc.

SHEPHERD, DAVID L. "Helping Secondary School Teachers Gain Competence in Teaching Reading." *Journal of Developmental Reading*, Vol. I, No. 2, Winter, 1958.

This article describes the joint program of the junior and senior high schools of Charlotte, N. C., and the Reading Center of Charlotte. An in-service program, demonstrations, consultant service, coordination of the work of classroom and remedial teachers, are some of the aspects of the total program, which is varied to meet the needs of each school, in accordance with teachers' expressed needs and the time they have available. A list of books suggested for the school's professional library on reading follows the article.

GLASS, GERALD G. "A Look at the Teaching of Word Analysis." *Elementary School Journal*, October, 1958.

This discussion of misunderstandings in the teaching of phonics and other aspects of word analysis is stimulating. Does a child understand the meaning of "blending two sounds" because he

is able to reproduce the correct blend after one explanation? Does he understand the meaning of a term like "rhyme" because he has been exposed to some examples? The writer of this article suggests going back to fundamental experiences in auditory discrimination for illustrations, e.g., the beginning, middle, and end of a story as the introduction to the beginning, middle, and end of a word; listening for identities and non-identities in sounds before attempting to distinguish them in words. The reiteration of the necessity for much concrete illustration of the presumably simple and common concepts necessary for the learner in

word analysis is highly appropriate. Much concrete experience must precede generalizations in the use of letter-sound cues, and not merely generalizations about the letter-sound relationships, but generalizations about the meaning of terms used. This excellent article offers a number of suggestions for teaching the meaning of terms.

FJELSTED, LILLIAN W. "Broadening Reading Interest Through Creative Expression. *Elementary English*, October, 1958.

In this article are presented descriptions of many activities used in working toward the goal of the title. It is full of concrete, helpful suggestions.

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## Interesting BOOKS for the Reading Teacher

BY

HARRY T. HAHN

Oakland County Schools, Michigan

### Plan for Better Spelling

RUSSELL, KARLENE V.; MURPHY, HELEN A.; and DURRELL, DONALD D. *Developing Spelling Power*. Yonkers-on-Hudson: World Book, 1957. Pp. 130. \$2.10. *Worksheets to Accompany Developing Spelling Power*. Pp. 32. \$.21.

The materials in this text were developed experimentally by the authors to determine whether or not a controlled review of word analysis skills would be useful in improving spelling abilities. The thirty lessons were designed to develop, at the intermediate grade level, those visual and auditory discrimination abilities that have been demonstrated to be important in spelling and other areas of the language arts. The success of the experiments encouraged the writers to publish these exercises.

The lessons are not designed to teach a specific spelling vocabulary. Instead, they provide a systematic study of the basic skills in word analysis, starting with four lessons which are designed to sharpen auditory and visual discrimination skills in recognizing initial consonants. They continue with final consonants, vowels, word structure, and use of the dictionary. The instructions are simple and direct. The children record their responses on a set of

*Worksheets to Accompany Developing Spelling Power*.

*Developing Spelling Power* may be used one or two days a week in the regular spelling program, with classes revealing marked spelling disability, or with a group of slow learners within a class. It appears that they would also be very useful in corrective reading classes at the junior high school level. Twenty minutes is the normal time allotted for each lesson.

### Homework Can Be Made Effective

BARD, HARRY. *Homework: A Guide for Secondary School Teachers*. New York: Rinehart, 1958. Pp. v+58. \$1.00.

Homework is again rearing its ugly head as a point of discussion in lay and educational circles, and it is this writer's feeling that Dr. Harry Bard's concise Rinehart Educational Pamphlet can be of considerable help to the secondary school teacher looking for guidance and advice on this ever-recurring topic. Dr. Bard's interesting summary of earlier developments in educational thinking concerning homework, and his concise review of current educational thought on this topic, offer the reader several sound justifications for sending youngsters to their homes and libraries with extraclass activities.



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Bard's viewpoint on such activities is briefly stated in his first chapter title, "Homework? Yes!"

Among the valuable inclusions in Dr. Bard's pamphlet is a plea that teachers make the homework assignment an effective medium for learning rather than a meaningless or incidental exercise. After presenting the thesis that homework assignments are effective only to the degree that they offer learning opportunities related to individual pupils with varied interests and abilities, Dr. Bard goes the second mile so often neglected in writings of this type, and offers a constructive ten-point program for improving home assignments.

Within the framework of this ten-point program, Dr. Bard argues for diversified homework assignments in all the subject-matter fields. — DODD E. ROBERTS, *Director, Language Arts Education, Oakland County, Michigan.*

### Important New Resource

*The Reader's Digest Reading Skill Builder*, Part 1, Grade Two Reading Level. Pleasantville: Reader's Digest Educational Department, 1958. Pp. 128. \$.51.

A number of years have passed since the last *Skill Builder* was released (at an elementary reading level), and it is evident that much thought and care were given to this new booklet. In this writer's opinion it is the finest of the entire series. The articles, factual and fictional, are interesting, exciting, and mature. The topics include rockets, cowboys, dogs, turtles, and mysteries. The large type is very readable, and the illustrations are striking and appro-

priate for older children. Vocabulary and comprehension checks are concise and useful. This *Skill Builder* could be used effectively in a junior or senior high school corrective reading program.

### Capitalize on Readiness

HYMES, JAMES L., JR. *Before the Child Reads*. Evanston: Row, Peterson, 1958. Pp. 96. \$2.00.

The author of this short, readable text is intent upon helping teachers examine misleading concepts regarding reading readiness of five- and six-year-olds and in providing a promising approach to early elementary instruction. In the "I've said it, now I will say it again!" style of a dynamic speaker who has a few important points that he wants to be certain are fully understood, Dr. Hymes takes issue with those who would "build" readiness to read. Children come to school ready to respond to instruction; the teacher merely needs to capitalize on their interest, abilities, and enthusiasm. "Our job is to go to town with the readiness that exists," reflects the author's point of view.

Teachers do not have to "build" the basic power or desire to read. Children have it and they will use it as soon as they are able. However, teachers can "build" health. Dr. Hymes contends that one of the most important facilities in the school is an observant, thoughtful teacher who is alert to the visual, hearing, and other physical difficulties of boys and girls. It is important that children be in good condition, physically and emotionally, as they approach the threshold of learning to read.

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## THE CLIP SHEET

Mary Elisabeth Coleman  
University of Pennsylvania

### Values

To meet the many requests of elementary school teachers for help in locating material for teaching values, Mate Graye Hunt has brought together a selected list of such helps. They include books, films, film strips, flat pictures, plays, poems, and recordings. The first part of the book has entries listed under each of the above categories, briefly annotated. Frequently the annotation includes a quotation from a magazine or newspaper review. For each entry, the annotation gives the values the book or other aid is designed to develop, and the grades for which the material is appropriate. In the second part of the guide each of the types of material is classified by the trait it is concerned with, from "Adaptability" through "Work" and "Younger Child."

This timely catalog should be in the elementary school professional library as a guide to the teacher and curriculum specialist in making wider use of the literature and visual materials the school has, and as a help in deciding what new materials to acquire. *Values Resource Guide, Annotated for the Elementary School Teacher*. Compiled by Mate Graye Hunt. American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. Pp. 108. \$1.00 (10 per cent discount for

five or more copies). Order from Dr. Edward C. Pomeroy, Executive Secretary, 11 Elm St., Oneonta, N. Y.

### Bibliographies

The 1959 edition of the *Children's Reading Service Book Catalog* brings up to date its selected list of about a thousand books, arranged by subject areas and grade levels from kindergarten through senior high school. The books range from older books, loved through the years by many children, to recent books about satellites and space travel. Forty-nine publishers are represented, with books from romantic fiction to science books that will be used chiefly as reference material. Included in the current catalog is a list of books for remedial reading, on a fifth- to ninth-grade interest level, and a third- to sixth-grade reading level. Entries are briefly annotated, and full information is given for ordering. *Children's Reading Service*, 1078 St. John's Place, Brooklyn 13, N. Y.

The latest edition of *A Bibliography of Books for Children* by the Association for Childhood Education International lists more than two thousand titles, old and new. The books, with short annotations, are listed under subject classification and are indexed by title, by author, and by publisher. Association for Child-



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hood Education International, 1200 15th St., N.W., Washington 5, D. C. Pp. 125. \$1.50 (20 per cent discount on lots of 25 or more).

Not brand new, but certainly valuable, is a list of about nine hundred books, with short annotations, for older students. Published by the Toronto Public Library, it includes books that will be of interest to teachers whose pupils are studying Canada. *Books for Youth*. Toronto Public Library, College and St. George St., Toronto, Canada. \$1.00. (Send cash or money order, *not* check.)

### Magazines

In a reprint leaflet from *Childhood Education*, Erna L. Christensen describes and evaluates current magazines for children. Elementary school classrooms and libraries are woefully deficient in their provision of current periodicals for children. Most of the magazines are inexpensive, and provide variety and recency that helps to stimulate interest in reading. The ACEI has made a contribution that should be widely used. "Among the Magazines—Magazines for Children." Association for Childhood Education International, 1200 Fifteenth St., N.W., Washington 5, D. C. Sample copies free; 2-99 copies for \$0.10 each; over 100 copies for \$0.08 each.

### Editors and Authors

In *Junior Libraries* for October, 1958, is a list of names of people who are very important to teachers and to children, though largely unknown to

them. These are the children's book editors of the publishing houses. Fifty-eight houses are listed. The information is particularly helpful if teachers or pupils want to correspond with the publisher. If children are enthusiastic about a book they should be encouraged to say so. One must be sure, of course, that correspondence with a publisher doesn't become an easy way to get information that should be learned through reference books and periodicals.

Also of interest is a listing of authors and artists who may be available as speakers. The names are given by state of residence. With each name is the publisher through whom arrangements should be made.

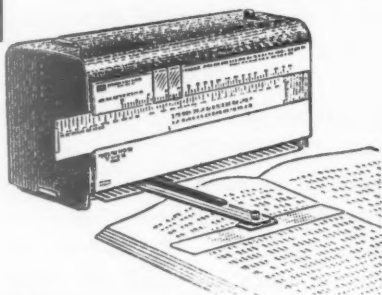
### Illustrators

The Horn Book, Inc., has issued a new volume, *Illustrators of Children's Books, 1946-1956*, compiled by Ruth Hill Viguers, Marcia Dalphin, and Bertha Mahony Miller. The book provides a needed addition to the earlier volume, *Illustrators of Children's Books, 1744-1945*. Part I gives an evaluation of current illustrations; Part II consists of biographies of five hundred illustrators of the decade, and Part III offers author-illustrator bibliographies. Knowing something about the author and illustrator of a book enhances many a child's interest. Here is a reliable source of information that will help the reader recognize author and illustrator as real people. The Horn Book, Inc., 585 Boylston St., Boston 16, Mass. \$20.

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY

**GEORGE D. SPACHE**

*President, International Reading Association*

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS held its first meeting of this year on November 1 at the Statler-Hilton in New York City. Practically all members of the Board and the national officers were present for all-day discussion. Among the major problems attacked by the Board were the finances of the Association and the planning of the next annual conference. Due to the continued growth of the Association and the success of the conference in Milwaukee, our financial position is very favorable. A surplus above our planned budget will enable the Association to increase and improve its services to councils and individual members. Prominent among these increased services to members will be an increase in the size of the April issue of *THE READING TEACHER*. This growth of the magazine will permit the publication of a number of articles in addition to those related to the theme of the issue, the enlargement of several regular features, and the presentation of the complete program of the forthcoming conference.

Other actions of the Board possible because of the favorable financial situation were an appropriation for several issues of a Council Newsletter, another for microfilming of a complete file of the publications of IRA and its parent organizations, NART and ICIRI. Plans were also

made for the construction of traveling exhibits which will be available for the display of IRA materials at all types of IRA meetings. In keeping with the long-range plans of the Association for promoting research, a sum of \$1,000 was added to the Elva Knight Research Fund. In addition, sizeable amounts of the general funds were transferred to interest-earning accounts to earn money for the Research Fund while awaiting final disposition. Other sums were earmarked for the use of the various working committees to be drawn upon as needs arise, and for the securing of more clerical assistance in the office of the Executive Secretary-Treasurer. The Board was in unanimous agreement with the principle of putting all this available money to work immediately for the improvement and enlargement of the IRA's services to its members.

The second major action of the Board was the choice of the theme, "Reading in a Changing Society," for the conference to be held in Toronto next May. The plans for the conference include a presentation of the demands of our changing society upon education as recognized by outstanding sociologists and historians. This challenge will be followed by sectional meetings centering around the implications of the demands of our changing society

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upon current practices in reading instruction. Another series of sectional meetings will discuss these implications in terms of future practices in reading instruction. The third group of sectional meetings will be devoted to a discussion of experimental procedures which seem to be significant for future trends in reading instruction. In addition to the usual sectional meetings concerned with reading instruction at various grade levels, there will be meetings especially designed for administrators and general supervisors, clinicians, and clinic directors, parents, and research workers. Special sections will be planned for reading consultants and supervisors, for various demonstrations, and reports of experiments with television for instructional purposes.

Reports from more than a dozen IRA committees were presented by committee chairmen or read to the Board by the President. For the most part, these reports listed members of the committee, their accomplish-

ments to date, and the plans for the remainder of the year. Miss Margaret Robinson, Chairman of the Local Arrangements Committee for the Toronto conference, asked for Board advice on a number of details in her planning. At the request of the by-laws committee, the Board decided to submit for balloting a number of constitutional changes in the next general mailing to members. Dr. A. Sterl Artley recommended selection of St. Louis as the site of the annual conference in 1961, and the Board approved. Direct mail campaigns to sell back copies of *THE READING TEACHER* and the *Proceedings* were advised by the Chicago Advisory Committee and the Publications Committee. These suggestions were adopted and will be undertaken shortly. At the President's suggestion, a resolution was adopted of the future policy toward the reprinting of IRA publications by other publishers. These and many other decisions of the Board resulted from the meeting and will take effect shortly.

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(Continued from Page 194)

securing broader meanings inherent in poetry. Also found significant differences between higher- and lower-level interpreters with respect to familiarity with poets and poetry, attitude toward poetry, and favorable experiences with poetry.

MCKINLEY, DOUGLAS P., 204 N.W. 18th St., Gainesville, Fla. To determine the influence of maternal personality, maternal child-rearing attitudes, and sensitivity to the

child's emotions upon children's reading performances. Three groups of mothers of children ages seven to thirteen—those having children retarded in reading, those who believed their children to have been retarded in reading but who were diagnosed as adequate, and those having children who were adequate in reading—did not differ significantly in personality patterns as measured by the Rosenzweig P-F Study.

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## COUNCIL NEWS

**LaVERNE STRONG**

Connecticut State  
Department of Education

### **To All IRA Councils**

Have you had the experience of turning eagerly to Council News only to find that the report of *your* activities has not been included in that issue? No, it's not negligence. It's those deadlines that wait for neither man nor beast. So? Please keep looking. If it is not in this issue, it will be in the next—or in the next.

### **To Form a New Council**

Organizational materials which outline the procedure to be followed in the forming of a new council are available upon request to the Organization Chairman, LaVerne Strong, State Department of Education, P. O. Box 2219 Hartford, Connecticut. All Canadian requests should be directed to Mr. Clare B. Routley, Department of Education, Parliament Building, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

### **Salute to New Councils**

Official welcome is extended to the *Iroquois Council* of Glens Falls, New York, and to the *Akron Area Council* of Ohio. Miss Lucille Drollette, Box 92, 270 Warren St., Glens Falls, is the President of the *Iroquois Council*. Dr. Helen R. Becker, 705 West Market St., Akron 3, is the President of the *Akron Area Council*.

### **To IRA Members Who Are Not Local or Intermediate Council Members**

Many holding individual membership in IRA read of IRA council activities in their area, but they do not know whom they should contact in order to join. A high percentage of IRA councils have reported the new officers and their addresses for 1958-59. Therefore, such information is available upon request to our Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. James M. McCallister, or to the Organization Chairman.

### **International News**

The many strong councils in Canada, the councils in Germany and in Hawaii, the inquiries from Australia, England, and the Philippine Islands indicate the world-wide response to IRA as a unique organization devoted exclusively to the improvement of reading.

The *Metropolitan Toronto Council* of IRA will be our hosts for the Fourth Annual Meeting of IRA on May 1 and 2, 1959. Although MTCIRA members have been busy making arrangements for the meeting, they have had a strong, vigorous program throughout the year. Dr. F. J. Schonnell spoke at the September meeting; Dr. Marjorie S. Johnson and Dr. Leland Jacobs were the

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speakers for the October and January meetings. A panel discussion is planned for the February meeting in which those who participated in the Toronto Summer School will discuss certain of their findings in regard to reading. The MTCIRA Annual Meeting in May will be a formal debate on the resolution that, "Today's Schooling Is Considerably Better Than It Was Twenty-five Years Ago."

Special activities include two workshops. The first, January 16-17, at the Toronto Teachers' College with Dr. William Sheldon, IRA Executive Board member, as leader, was planned for principals, inspectors, and administrative personnel only. The second, January 30-31, at the Toronto Teachers' College with Miss Phyllis Todd as leader, was planned for teachers beginning this year, and teachers with one or two years' experience.

### California

The *San Francisco Bay Council* and the *Bay Area Reading Council* invited the *Central California Council of Teachers of English* to co-sponsor the FIRST JOINT READING CONFERENCE on Saturday, November 8, on the new campus of the College of the Holy Names in Oakland. The program was planned as follows: Keynote address—"The Surface and Depth in Reading," by Dr. David Russell, IRA Executive Board member. Group sessions — from kindergarten through college and adult level of reading and language interest. Speakers, discussants,

and chairman—from the University of California, University of San Francisco, College of the Holy Names, Sacramento State College, San Jose State College, San Francisco State College, The Oakland Public Schools, the Mt. Diablo School District, the Junior College, high schools, and elementary schools of San Francisco and Oakland. Luncheon speaker—Howard Pease, the distinguished author of a long list of popular boys' adventure stories.

### Illinois

The *McLean County - ISNU Reading Council* presented the annual Workshop in Reading on Saturday, September 27, at the new Metcalf School, Illinois State Normal University. The central theme was "Current Trends in the Language Arts." The keynote speaker was Dr. May Hill Arbuthnot, noted author, editor, and lecturer in the field of children's literature. The discussion groups were: Primary—Kindergarten readiness, New Ideas and Materials, and Choral Speaking; Intermediate — Study Habits and Skills, and Spelling; the Junior and Senior High—Creative Writing, and Literature in Action. The discussion groups were strengthened by the presence in each of a teacher who had achieved outstanding classroom success in that area.

### New York

The combined IRA councils of New York and surrounding areas

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co-sponsored a one-day reading conference on November 1 at the Joan of Arc Junior High School, New York City. The keynote was the presentation of the Rockefeller Report on Education. Emphasis was given to the research and the new goals stated in this document. Following the general session ten group meetings discussed what can be done in reading to meet the goals set up in one aspect of education discussed in the report. In the afternoon four teachers gave demonstrations with children, applying points stressed in some of the group meetings. Dr. Nila Banton Smith, New York University, and Chairman of the IRA Publication Committee, served as Conference Planning Chairman.

A joint meeting of IRA, the Educational Records Bureau and the American Council on Education was held during the Twenty-third Educational Conference held October 30-31 at the Commodore Hotel in New York City. Dr. George Spache, IRA President, presented the keynote address, "How Effectively Are Our Schools Meeting the Public Demand for Teaching the Basic Skills?" Dr. Mary C. Austin, Harvard University; Dr. Mary E. Meade, Assistant Superintendent, High School Division, New York City; Dr. Oliver W. Melchior, Principal, Scarsdale, New York, High School; and Dr. William D. Sheldon, member of the Executive Board of IRA and Director of The Reading Laboratory of Syracuse University, formed a panel to further explore and broaden the topic.

### Northern New England

The School Vision Committee of the Massachusetts Society of Optometrists in cooperation with the Northern New England Reading Association presented a forum on "Vision and School Children" on Saturday, October 18, at the Hotel Kenmore in Boston. Addresses given were, "Vision: Its Development in the Child," by Dr. Richard J. Apell, Gesell Institute of Child Development; "Significance of Vision in Reading," by Dr. Thomas Eames, Boston University; "The Multi-Professional Approach to Reading Problems," by Dr. Eames; and "Significant Advances in Vision Care and Their Relation to Intelligence," by Dr. A. M. Skeffington, Director of Education, Optometric Extension Program.

### Ohio

The newly formed *South Euclid-Lyndhurst IRA Council* has planned a professionally valuable program for their first year. In October the members attended the *Ohio IRA Council Luncheon* held at the Northeastern Ohio Teachers Convention in Cleveland. The first council program was open to the entire staff of the city schools. A panel discussed "Capsules of Reading in Our Schools." The exchange of ideas ranged from first-grade readiness to reading in the senior high school. A poll was conducted to determine the amount and the quality of TV viewing by children. Analysis of data may prove to be a guide in interesting children in the better TV programs.



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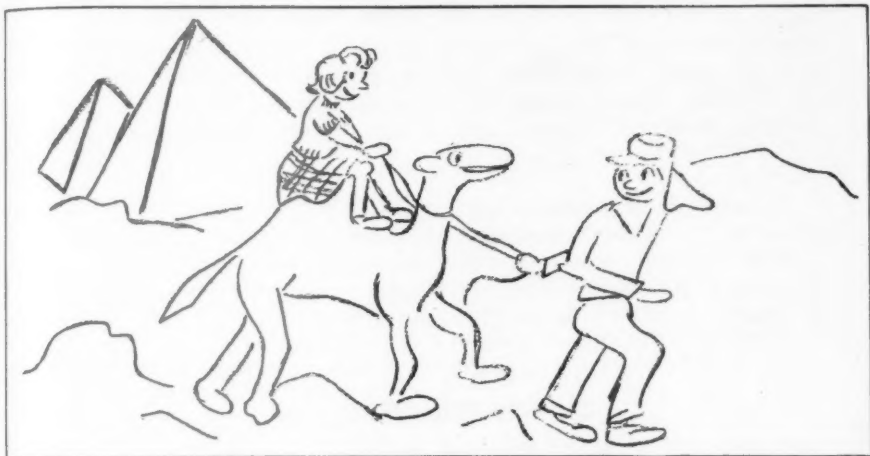
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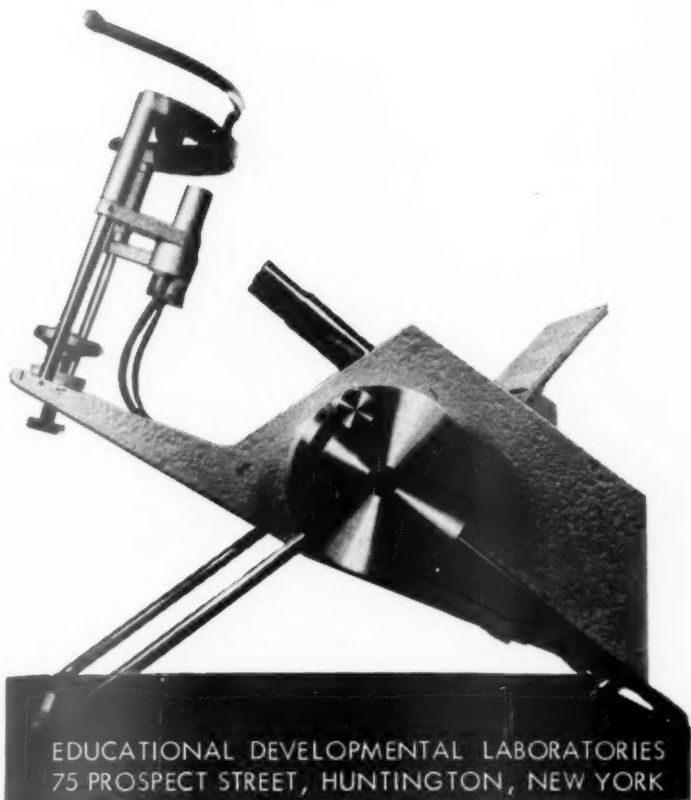






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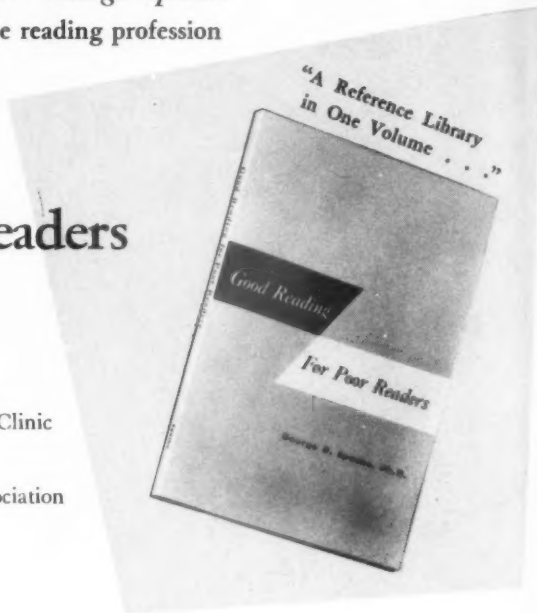
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